

wisdom of his proposals and to make the foundations of his work sure. Having done this he is in an assured position broad-based upon popular appreciation, whereas in a community where all is left to the expert and the politician, matters are in a state of continual ebb and flow.

So far as I could judge, the decentralised system is popular both with the public and with the teachers of New Zealand. It is interesting to compare the steady growth of New Zealand education, the gradual perfecting of co-ordination and interlocking of various grades of instruction, and the consistent policy followed throughout, with the spasmodic efforts made in Victoria. Our educational history of late years has been a succession of upbuilding and destruction, with constant change of policy, justified at the time in the name of economy, and railed at a few years later as extravagance of the worst kind. The different grades of Victorian education are quite unorganized, and there is consequent educational waste and inefficiency in the system as a whole. It is difficult to see how in our present condition any different result may be expected with any degree of certainty. Public interest in the work of the schools and in the ideals which administrators are trying to realise is very slight, and so, although good work may be done for the moment, by watching a favourable opportunity for advance, there is no guarantee that in one of our oft-recurring fits of national hysteria the good results may not be destroyed. We have a good illustration of this uncertainty in the history of the scholarship regulations. Up to 1886 the only provision in Victoria for secondary education to State scholars was by twelve exhibitions. In 1886 the Minister created 200 scholarships per annum, in addition to the exhibitions. In 1893 the scholarships were abolished, and the Department solicited free scholarships from the proprietors of secondary schools, although these schools are private business adventures. In 1900 the scholarships were again introduced, the number being fixed at sixty per annum. In 1902 they were reduced to forty, and now stand at that number. As I write there is a proposal to make a great increase. It is manifestly impossible to make an adequate connection between two important grades of education under such circumstances.

The history of the introduction of manual training into Victorian schools is also a specially good example of spasmodic policy resulting from absence of organized public interest. In 1898 there was a clamant public demand for improvement in technical education, voiced by public men and the leading newspapers. As a result, a Royal Commission on Technical Education was appointed. The attention focussed on the subject gave an opportunity to those educationists who were following the trend of education throughout the progressive countries of the world to advocate the claims of manual training as a primary-school subject. There is a consensus of opinion among enlightened educationists that manual training justifies its place in a primary-school course as an agent in mental development, quite apart from its purely utilitarian aspect. But viewed from the standpoint of a preparation for an after technical training it becomes an essential. This is the experience the world over. Accordingly, arrangements were made to engage expert organizers and instructors in drawing, manual training specially so called, kindergarten occupations, and cookery. Excellent appointments and an enthusiastic beginning were made. The teachers responded magnificently. They came voluntarily to central classes at their own expense, they gave up holidays to attend the summer schools, and the work bade fair to be well inaugurated. Then came changes of policy, and discouragement after discouragement. The cookery centres, which in their organization and instruction will compare favourably with those of any Department, have been limited to eleven, instead of the twenty-four planned. The experts engaged have been compensated for loss of office, and have left the service; the specially trained teachers have been sent back to their ordinary work, and, save for eleven centres, the work is at a standstill. The value of it is unquestionable. Organized public opinion would, I feel sure, have made an effort to extend rather than to diminish the scope of such work. Similar results followed the introduction of kindergarten work. Money was not forthcoming for material and equipment, and so this branch of junior school-work has suffered. The Department found itself unable to respond to the legitimate demands of the expert organizer, and consequently had no alternative but to terminate her contract. In manual training the effect has been in some respects disastrous. Woodwork centres were established, under specially trained teachers, and ordinary staff teachers qualified in great numbers to teach cardboard modelling and paper-work. Then came the question of supply of material, and when it was decided that the Department was not to grant supplies the work fell off. No organization existed to raise funds locally, or to impress upon the parents the value of the work. Attendances at sloyd centres diminished, and the very type of boys most likely to be benefited were often excluded. As a result, in some case the teachers were soon working at only half-pressure. As for cardboard modelling and paper-work, they are practically extinct in Victoria, and we have gained another addition to the long list of discouraged enthusiasms. Of course, it is not certain that any other result would have followed from a decentralised system, but I feel sure that had public interest in education been organized this new work would now be in a healthy state. I was struck by the evidence of public appreciation of educational problems when I first landed in Wellington, and in all parts of the colony this evidence was confirmed. It depends, I am sure, upon local administration. New-Zealanders are all interested in their schools, because all share in their management.

The Victorian Board of Advice System.

The only approach to local control in Victorian education is in the Board of Advice. No one would, I think, seriously contend that the present Board of Advice system is satisfactory, either to the Department and the public or to the members of the Boards themselves. The Boards have comparatively little to do, and therefore it is no wonder that members who are genuinely interested in educational progress, and who desire to help, are soon discouraged out of the Boards, till a contested election becomes a rarity, and in some cases it is impossible to get even nominee members.* The

* NOTE.—The recent triennial elections of Boards of Advice (November, 1902) resulted as follows: Number of districts in which elections should have taken place, 367. Contested elections, 49 Boards. Elected without contest, 125 Boards. Nominations not sufficient to fill all the seats, 95 Boards. No nominations at all, 98 Boards.