

Thorndon, and Levin are now equipped with suitable laboratories, and individual work in science is being carried on in these schools. The necessary rooms have not yet been provided at Pahiataua, Hutt, and Petone, but when the difficulties of obtaining accommodation at these places have been overcome we hope to see suitable provision made for practical work for both boys and girls.

The report of an Inspector must necessarily partake somewhat of the unpleasant nature of a "counsel of perfection," and we feel we should be guilty of grave injustice if in our desire to criticize certain weak points in the management of our schools we failed to express our appreciation of the good work done by our teachers as a whole. The Board is fortunate in having in its service as teachers not a few educationists of high standing and long experience, to whom we cheerfully acknowledge our indebtedness for many suggestions and ideas which have proved of advantage to the district generally. It is impossible to be brought into daily contact with the members of the teaching profession without being deeply impressed with the difficulties in which they labour. Within the past few years a great deal has been done to improve their condition in the matters of pay and status, but much more remains to be done. Year by year the importance of education demands that its efficient direction and management should be in the hands not only of highly trained experts and specialists, but of men of high ideals and endowed with exceptional parts and special qualifications; and it is not reasonable to suppose that men of this stamp will be attracted to a profession that asks for so much, yet gives so little in return.

We have, &c.,

T. R. FLEMING,	} Inspectors.
F. H. BAKEWELL,	
J. S. TENNANT,	

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 24th January, 1908.

In a brief review of the work done during the past year in the schools of this education district it is difficult to compare one year with another under the old and the present working conditions. Under the old system of regulating examinations and the inspection of schools an Inspector was in close touch with the children in every school of his district, but now he is debarred, if not directly by regulation, certainly by official sentiment from making himself acquainted in any detail with the real working of a school. The head teacher does the examination work and makes promotions, and the central department in Wellington has complete control of all examinations for scholarships, whether Board's, Queen's, or National. So also the examination of pupil-teachers has come under the control of the authorities in Wellington, and the only work that remains as a semblance of the past is the examination of Standard VI pupils for certificates of competency and proficiency. These changes, important as they are, merely modify the arrangements for carrying on the work of education. Just as before, the question remains as to the character of the instruction that is being given in the schools. Have the increased responsibilities of the teachers brought about improved working-conditions? and is the country likely to have a brighter, better, and more intelligent democracy under the newer conditions than was possible under the old? The answer to these questions must be, I think, deferred for the present, and the reason is a simple one. Freedom, under any circumstances, only becomes of value when it can be used beneficially. The freedom to classify and promote children implies skill and training on the part of the teachers, and were all the teachers in the Board's service qualified by training and experience, the responsibilities that the regulations throw upon them would certainly not be misplaced. But a large proportion of the teachers, particularly those in charge of the smaller schools, have never been trained, and in such cases it becomes a difficult matter to decide what ought to be done. Many of the untrained teachers are very earnest in their teaching, and make efforts to carry out the departmental regulations as far as they can; but the inexperienced teacher fails to realise the need of thoroughness in the essential work of a school, and promotions are made much to the detriment of pupils. In the case of the trained teacher, the freedom of classification enjoyed has not been abused to any noticeable extent, and as the responsibilities increase it appears to me that a high standard of work will be maintained in the schools. In the large centres this is to be expected. Competition is an important factor, but, apart from this, a higher standard of duty prevails among the majority of teachers, and the work is done regardless of pass or failure, the aim being the betterment of the children. I wish something could be done for the untrained and inexperienced teachers. The most depressing work one has to do is to visit some of the smaller schools. The teachers in them can hardly be dismissed for incompetency, as it is doubtful whether their places could be filled to better advantage as things are at present. But it is possible to improve them. A month's course of special training in one of the large central schools like Gisborne, Napier, and Hastings would be a public benefit, as it would assist them in placing the smaller schools under better working-conditions, and I trust that something will be done by the Board to carry out the suggestion now made. As showing the disadvantages under which the instruction in the small country school is carried on, it should be stated that not a single pupil in the small schools throughout the district qualified for a scholarship during the past year.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS.—The school districts have not shown any material increase in the school population, and only three new schools were opened. One hundred and one schools were in operation during some part of the school year, but four of them were temporarily closed at the date of the annual visit. The school rolls contained the names of 9,465 pupils at the time of the annual examinations. These represent an increase of 408 pupils compared with the corresponding period of the previous year. Five Catholic schools were also visited and dealt with as in the case of Board