

1908.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

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Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM THE THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

CONSIDERABLE progress continues to be made in the several education districts in connection with the establishment and conduct of classes for manual and technical instruction. In districts in which the controlling authorities or the managers, as the case may be, have appointed directors or superintendents there is evidence of a decided advance, in face of many real difficulties and hindrances, towards the goal in view—namely, the establishment of organized technical schools, providing graded courses having a direct bearing on local requirements in the way of science, art, and technology. It is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when attendance at a technical school shall mean not, as has been too often the case in the past, merely attendance at one or two classes, not necessarily connected, but attendance at a definite course of instruction. The advance referred to, while due in some measure to the provision made by the Government for free technical education, has been brought about by the continued efforts of those in charge of the schools, supplemented by the enlightened attitude, in many cases, of employers who have done and are doing a good deal to encourage attendance at classes. Valuable assistance in the same direction has also been rendered by many local bodies, and industrial and trade associations. Assistance of a practical nature in the shape of monetary contributions continues to be received by controlling authorities and managers. These contributions are to be regarded as evidence of local interest in the work, and, with the Government subsidy of £1 for £1, have made a welcome addition to the funds of the classes concerned.

During the year applications by controlling authorities for new or additional buildings and equipment for classes have been favourably entertained so far as available funds and other circumstances permitted. In one or two instances the estimate by the controlling authority of the actual requirements of a centre in the way of buildings seems at present hardly to have been borne out by returns of classes and attendance thereat. There is, however, reason to expect that in the instances referred to the accommodation provided will be fully taken up in the near future. The matter is in the hands of those in whose interest it is to use the opportunities now placed within their reach.

Reference was made last year to the establishment in certain districts of sub-centres in the smaller towns. This desirable extension of work continues to progress with results that appear to justify the experiment. Given suitable and convenient means of communication, there would appear to be no reason why technical schools in the larger centres of population should not, as parent schools, arrange for classes at convenient sub-centres. In any case it would seem to be desirable from many points of view for what may be termed the central technical school in a district to be closely in touch with such classes as may be established in adjacent townships. A good deal of well-meant, but, it is to be feared, wasted effort would probably be saved, and better results in other ways achieved thereby.

Over eighteen hundred (1,800) junior and senior free places were held at technical schools during the year, an increase of about two hundred. The proportion of junior free pupils qualifying for senior free places, entitling them to three years' additional free education, continues to be comparatively small, the total number of senior free pupils last year being only 146. The