2. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION, OF THE INSPECTOR OF DOMESTIC SUBJECTS, AND OF THE INSPECTORS OF TECHNICAL SCHOOLS AND MANUAL TRAINING CENTRES.

SIR,— Education Department, Wellington, 11th July, 1927.

I have the honour to present herewith my report on certain aspects of technical education and manual training during the year 1926, together with extracts from the annual reports of the Inspectors concerned.

I have, &c.,
W. S. LA TROBE,
Superintendent of Technical Education.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

I. TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND, 1926.

(W. S. LA TROBE, Superintendent of Technical Education.)

Attendance.—The numbers attending in technical schools and classes during the year 1926 were considerably larger than those for the previous year. The apparent increase was abnormal, being partly due to the fact that the normal increase of the previous year was masked by the effect of the epidemic of infantile paralysis in the early part of the year, both day and evening classes being adversely affected.

Staffing.—I have again to record a general improvement in the staffing of technical schools, the proportion of teachers with qualifications for classification in Division I being greater than for the previous year. When in 1920 the Department took over the payment of salaries of teachers in technical schools and of classes for manual training 36 per cent. of the men and 23 per cent. of the women were qualified for Division I classification, as having had the benefit of a training equivalent to that required for a university degree or diploma, whereas in the published list of classified teachers in December, 1926, 50 per cent. of the men and 41 per cent. of the women were so qualified. The proportion of Division I teachers in the technical high schools and technical day schools is somewhat higher, being about 64 per cent. for men and 41 per cent. for women.

Buildings and Equipment.—In regard to buildings, the schools are not, on the whole, well served. In some cases the accommodation is old, unsuitable, and inconvenient, and in most cases it is inadequate. In this respect the technical schools are no better off than the primary schools, and it is hardly possible to avoid overcrowding, since the schools are growing rapidly (in ten years the rolls of the technical high schools have increased from 2,347 to 5,963), and the moneys available for new buildings, and especially for rebuilding, are necessarily limited.

The same is to a great extent true of equipment, though the conditions are somewhat different, as it is rather in proportion to the attainments and needs of the students, and not solely in proportion to numbers, that provision must be made.

Under the Apprentices Act, 1923, there has been some development of classes for trade training, in which specialized machinery and other equipment is necessary if the instruction is to be closely enough correlated with actual trade conditions. In few trades is it possible to provide such close correlation without having to face problems of material and output which are not found easy of solution even in the manufacturing centres of countries like Great Britain and the United States of America, and are practically insoluble in the Dominion. In one trade, that of linotype operating, the conditions are simplified by the absence of waste in material, and further by the ease with which schools have been able to secure on loan the free use of suitable machines. In certain other trades—as, for instance, that of motor-mechanics—the conditions for providing trade training in the technical schools are not impossible. In trades such as bootmaking, machine joinery and cabinetmaking, &c., while the cost of equipment is high, the cost of material and the disposal of output are more serious factors which have hitherto prevented any considerable development of what is, after all, the business of a specialized trade school rather than of a technical school.

In regard to the general laboratory and workshop equipment of technical schools, the present provision is for the most part suitable only for students taking what corresponds to a minor course as given in the British technical schools, and even at that the equipment provided is not always fully utilized. On the other hand, it may be doubted whether the more advanced technical-school students can be induced to continue their studies if the necessary equipment is lacking. Certainly there is great difficulty in obtaining the services of competent instructors in subjects for which apparatus for practical work is either totally lacking or inadequate and out-of-date. Where competent instructors are found, they are greatly hampered in their teaching if the necessary equipment is not available, and their services in certain aspects of the more advanced work may be lost altogether.