

REPORT.

INTRODUCTORY AND GENERAL.

MUCH consideration has been given during the past year to the problem of securing better articulation between the primary and post-primary schools. To this end a committee consisting of representatives of the University, the training colleges, the primary, secondary, and technical schools, Education Boards, School Committees, and business men interested in education sat in Wellington at various times during the year to consider the remodelling of the primary-school syllabus and generally to advise on the best means of co-ordinating the different types of schools. The report of the committee will receive the careful consideration of the Government, and it is hoped that a further step forward in the organization of educational facilities will result.

In thus seeking to improve the education system it must not be thought that the Government considers the existing organization ineffective. Visiting teachers both from Canada and England bear testimony to the high standard of primary education in New Zealand. While undoubtedly the type of education in both primary and secondary schools has been somewhat too bookish, it must be remembered that, wherever possible, manual training, consisting generally of woodwork for boys and domestic arts for girls, has been freely provided. In country schools, where it is impossible, except at huge cost, to centralize the manual training, handwork in the shape of cardboard-modelling for boys and needlework for girls has long been provided. In all schools science is taught, and wherever possible the curriculum has a bias towards rural pursuits. It will thus be seen that in the primary schools there are not lacking opportunities for boys and girls to show the best of their talents, whether towards the type of education provided in technical schools or towards the more literary type provided in secondary schools. It is also worthy of note that not less than 68 per cent. of pupils who qualify for free secondary education avail themselves of the privilege. The number of secondary pupils who qualify for University education, and particularly the number qualifying for free University education, has increased year by year. In 1912 only sixty-four secondary pupils gained higher leaving certificates, the possession of which gives free University education for three or four years, while last year no less than 756 gained these certificates, and of these 459 embarked on University courses. It is worthy of note that the number of University students per thousand of the population considerably exceeds the corresponding number in any of the Australian States. The proportion in New Zealand is roughly 3·21 students per 1,000.

While it would be unfair to those who have built up the education system to ignore what it has done and is doing for the people, it would be foolish to be blind to its imperfections and to neglect opportunities for improvement. It is acknowledged that all schools tend to draw away from the life of the people and to follow lines of study that grow more and more divergent from the actualities of life. A periodical stocktaking is, therefore, indispensable. The different types of schools and the different branches in the teaching profession tend to lose touch with one another and to pursue different ends. The time is ripe for an overhaul of the whole school system, and this will be undertaken with due regard to the needs of the community as a whole and to the importance of not sacrificing the good features of the existing system. Whatever reorganization is adopted will not be dominated by, yet will not ignore, educational thought and convictions in other countries.

Undoubtedly primary-school education might be made more practical, and should at the same time give greater prominence to the fostering of the reading habit and the study of good books. The æsthetic side of education might well receive more attention in all type of schools, while there are few who do not agree that the secondary schools should provide a broader curriculum than has been usual in this type of school in times past. The rapid growth and the increasing popularity of