

II. PREVOCATIONAL AND MANUAL TRAINING.

ATTENDANCE.

The total enrolment of full-time pupils at technical high schools and technical day schools, including pupils in amalgamated schools, taking courses under the Regulations for Manual and Technical Instruction was approximately 7,500, as compared with about 6,800 for the previous year.

In the special manual-training classes in woodwork, ironwork, cookery, laundry-work, &c., for pupils in primary schools, junior high schools, and district high schools, the total number was approximately 39,100, as against about 39,700 in the previous year. Of this total, about 3,150 were pupils from private schools. Deducting also some 2,500 pupils in the secondary classes of district high schools, and 350 to allow for pupils in Standard IV sent to manual-training centres, it appears that at least 33,000 of the 45,000 pupils in Standards V and VI of the primary schools, or more than 73 per cent., received manual training in specially equipped centres. About 40,600 of the primary-school pupils also received instruction in nature-study and elementary agriculture, in classes whose work was supervised by itinerant instructors, who paid, on the average, three or four visits to each school during the year.

The increase of nearly 10 per cent. in the attendance at full-time technical-high-school or technical day-school courses is fairly distributed over the Dominion, and in three of the main centres at least the accommodation is strained to overflowing, and the numbers, including evening and part-time day classes, are too great for the Principal to fulfil all the duties of his position without assistance in the administration of his school. To have the direction of the post-primary education of a thousand pupils, boys and girls, in some five or six full-time day courses, and of another two thousand students in a wide variety of subjects taken in some two hundred different classes in the evening, is an impossible task for one man unless he is able to command the assistance of a Vice-Principal or of heads of departments with sufficient time free of teaching for performing the necessary duties of organization and supervision in their own departments. Under present conditions that personal supervision of the actual teaching which is absolutely necessary for efficiency cannot be given.

Great difficulties, too, are being experienced by certain of the schools that have been built on sites which, though perhaps sufficient at the time of their establishment, have, owing to the growth of the schools, now proved to be much too small even for class-room and workshop purposes, to say nothing of the social and recreative needs of the students. Some, too, have been so placed that traffic and other street noises, which have enormously increased in recent years, militate to a large extent against the efficiency of the schools, and impose a severe strain on the health of pupils and teachers; nor is it easy to see how any amelioration of the position can be made.

On the other hand, the smaller country schools which have, in general, no such disadvantages to contend with, find that their chief problem is to secure a staff adequate in numbers and power to conduct the varied courses required by the pupils, since the regulations prescribe staffs according to the total number of pupils and not according to the courses and the standard of attainment required in the several courses. The difficulty is aggravated in those centres which by reason of inaccessibility or reputed badness of climate are not regarded as specially desirable places of residence.

In view of the great importance of a knowledge of domestic arts and domestic science in the adult life of the girls, it is disappointing to find that the courses in home science at the technical high schools are comparatively small and are not increasing in attendance. Out of some 385,000 women in various occupations, including home-keeping, the 1921 census for the Dominion shows that over 330,000, or nearly 85 per cent., are engaged in occupations for which a training in the home-science course is a suitable preparation. The actual number of pupils taking a home-science course in technical high schools and technical day schools in 1927 was 891 out of a total number of 3,163 girls, or about 28 per cent. There were, in addition, courses in home science in several of the secondary schools, among which a few, such as Wanganui Girls' College, and Napier and Otago Girls' High Schools, are now endeavouring to give a more decided domestic bias to courses which were formerly called home or domestic courses, but often contained very little domestic work.

The largest number of girls are reached through the manual-training classes for primary-school children, which are attended by about 18,800 girls, drawn from about 600 schools, so that nearly 75 per cent. of the total number of girls at the stage of Standards V and VI receive some instruction in cookery, and possibly a little in laundry-work, while all the girls in primary schools receive some instruction in sewing. The time that can be given to such subjects in the primary school is very small—not usually more than three hours weekly even for Standards V and VI, and much less in other classes. Such treatment of homecraft as is possible in the primary stage should certainly be continued more intensively, and on sound scientific and practical lines, in the post-primary day or evening school. Owing to the extremely vague way in which the terms “home” or “domestic” have been applied to courses in some high schools it is difficult to give any figures relating to these institutions. For example, one high school applied the term “home course” to a general course which excluded Latin, but only gave the compulsory hour per week of needlework in the first two years, and gave none after that, and no cookery or housecraft. In the third and fourth years it gave some elementary hygiene.

STAFFING.

The full-time staff of the technical schools continues to improve according to classification, for of 295 full-time teachers on the staffs of technical schools, 68 per cent. of the men and 50 per cent. of the women were last year classed in Division I as having qualifications equivalent at least to those of a diploma of the University, as compared with 64 per cent. for men and 41 per cent. for women in the previous year. As regards teachers in manual-training centres and travelling instructors in agriculture, 20 per cent. of the men and 33 per cent. of the women were classified in Division I.