

Seventy-five per cent. of the schools have only one or two teachers, yet the subjects demanded by the pupils may cover so wide a range that two, three, or even four teachers may not among themselves possess the necessary specialized knowledge. In such schools a free choice of curriculum is perhaps even more necessary than in city schools, for though the pupils are mainly drawn from rural districts it cannot be assumed that either they or their parents intend that the pupils' future vocation will be associated with rural life. In fact, a considerable percentage of these pupils are in attendance for the express purpose of qualifying for city vocations. This, however, does not relieve the schools from the responsibility of giving our future rural population the opportunity of living the most complete life which a wisely directed education system can make possible. If, then, we are to improve materially the efficiency of these schools, we must increase their enrolment by, say, including in the secondary department Forms I and II (Standards V and VI) of the neighbouring schools, or by extending the system of conveying pupils to secondary departments at convenient centres.

SPECIAL CLASSES.

The Special Classes which have been established to cater for those children who are, through circumstances other than health or irregular attendance, at least two or three years in attainments behind pupils of the same age-level continue to provide opportunities for self-expression through wisely chosen activities. Though these pupils live a happier life and make much greater progress than they would as members of a class of an average age-level much lower than their own, more could be done for them. They need, for instance, a wider range of manual work as intimately associated as possible with the life they will probably lead. And as such pupils do not pass to secondary schools arrangements should, if possible, be made to encourage them to take advantage of the facilities offered by our technical high schools and evening classes.

During the year strong representations have been made by societies of country women for the establishment in the North Island of a residential institution for those retarded children who are living in localities remote from Special Classes.

In Auckland the Class for the Care of Backward Children has been the means of bringing to a number of children of an intellectual capacity too low to profit by even Special Class training, the opportunity of living a happy life, of acquiring many arts, and of developing habits of body and mind that would have been quite impossible of achievement in the seclusion of their own homes. The Department supplies the building and the teachers; a group of voluntary workers gives invaluable aid, not only in teaching, but in providing for the material comfort and well-being of the pupils.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL.

The Correspondence School, conducted by the Department, shows a continuous and rapid expansion of its roll numbers. At the end of the year there were approximately 2,450 on the roll, of whom 800 were post-primary pupils. This represents an increase of nearly 500, of whom 55 per cent. were post-primary pupils. It is in the post-primary division that future increase is most probable, since there are a very large number of such young persons who are not within convenient reach of post-primary schools. The primary roll will probably show little increase. To those living in districts remote from educational facilities, and to the physically disabled, the school renders excellent service. The continuity of the pupils' work is in no way affected by changes of staff or vagaries of climate.

The school affords a very good academic training to its pupils, though it cannot give that social intercourse which is so valuable a part of ordinary school life. Nevertheless, its pupils on subsequently joining a post-primary school generally take their place on equal terms with their new form mates. Manual training cannot well be taken, but an attempt will be made to see what can be done along these lines. The school has a very good library, and its pupils thus perforce acquire the invaluable technique of independent study, even though the amount of reading required may induce a certain degree of boredom. But every effort is made to relieve any such monotony by the establishment among the pupils of clubs of various kinds, including pen-friendship clubs, whose members correspond with young people in many lands.

BROADCASTING TO SCHOOLS.

The number of schools receiving broadcasts from 1YA, 2YA, 3YA, and 4YA (rebroadcast from 2YA) continues to increase. Now that the Broadcasting Service has been reorganized opportunity will be taken to review the situation in order to co-ordinate the broadcasting work in the various centres, thus avoiding, if possible, unnecessary duplication of talks, and, through the medium of the powerful 2YA Station, rebroadcasting the best talks throughout the Dominion. Opportunity may also be taken to test and improve the microphone technique of the various speakers with the aim of improving the best and eliminating those whose voice and method of delivery fail to carry conviction with even excellent material. For the technique of the invisible speaker must be superior to that of the teacher face to face with his pupils.

In the past schools have been able to buy approved radio equipment through the Department on very advantageous terms. A number of schools, however, have not always exercised sufficient care to obtain the type of receiver best suited to the school and the district, unmindful of the fact that the value of a radio programme is largely lost where reception is imperfect. Steps will be taken to afford more guidance to School Committees and teachers in this matter.