

to the provision not only of University tuition fees, but also of boarding-allowances in cases in which the bursar is required to live away from home in order to attend a University College or professional school, or, although living at home, is unable to avail himself of a bursary providing for tuition fees only without some further monetary assistance.

I have felt for some years that with the return of prosperous conditions it might be possible to establish some form of bursary tenable at a post-primary school. At present all bursaries, even including the special bursaries in home science, engineering, agriculture, &c., are awarded in order to enable students to follow a chosen University course.

At the post-primary stage conveyance allowances, boarding-allowances of five shillings a week, and free school books are facilities offered, with no special provision for the more brilliant pupil, even when he is unable to avail himself, owing to lack of means, of schooling offered.

Many families in moderate circumstances, both in town and country, must find it very difficult to keep children, whose ability is clearly above the average, at a post-primary school for any length of time, even when the schooling is free. It is very desirable that these children remain at school, and some monetary assistance would help materially to that end. The need is probably greater in the later than in the earlier years of the post-primary course, and the selection of bursars can be made more accurately at that stage.

The award of "boarding bursaries" not only to deserving applicants living away from a post-primary school, but also to those living near such a school and unable to avail themselves fully of its facilities without some monetary assistance would, I am convinced, be a forward movement.

EXAMINATIONS.

Probably in no year more than in 1936 have examinations come so much under review, largely as a result of the somewhat startling findings of the English committee presided over by Sir Philip Hartog. There can be no disputing, in the face of the evidence produced, the conclusions reached by the committee and published in December, 1935, in their pamphlet "An Examination of Examinations." Every one who has much to do with examinations, either inside or outside the school, knows that the standards of examiners vary, and that the greatest care has to be taken, and in this country is being taken, by examining bodies in order to ensure that candidates are not penalized by wide variations in standard. No one, however, was quite prepared for the magnitude of the variations found by the committee.

The substitution of an "internal" for an "external" examination does not ensure that only the deserving pupils pass and the undeserving fail, for standards vary just as widely from school to school and even from teacher to teacher in the same school as did the various examiners in the investigation referred to; and no inspectorial corps, no matter how efficient nor how strong numerically, can hope to prevent the variations from becoming wider unless they resort to some form of objective test.

No certificate issued by individual schools can adequately replace those issued by a central authority, such a certificate handicapping as it does the pupil from the small and little-known school in comparison with the pupil from a large and well-known school; and yet the findings of the English committee have shaken the faith of many in examinations, probably owing to the fact that more prominence has been given to the spectacular results of the investigation than to the final conclusion. This is given verbatim—

"The question may at once be asked: Should examinations be abolished? If not, what remedies can be suggested?

"The committee are clearly opposed to the root-and-branch policy. They are of opinion that examinations as a test of efficiency are necessary. They are further of opinion that, in addition to those examinations which yield identical results when applied by different examiners—*e.g.*, 'New Type' or 'Objective' examinations—the traditional 'essay' examination should be preserved. But they hold that it is as impracticable to recommend an *a priori* cure for the defects of the present examination system as it would be to recommend an *a priori* cure for a disease. It is only by careful and systematic experiment that methods of examination can be devised not liable to the distressing uncertainties of the present system."

CURRICULA.

The process of broadening the curricula has been carried appreciably further during the year. More pupils at all stages are studying subjects such as geography, drawing, singing, and musical appreciation as part of a sound general education, and the proportion of schools in which some form of manual instruction is not given to almost all pupils at the outset of their courses is falling. The absence of facilities alone prevents other schools from going as far in this direction as they desire.

Occasionally criticism is heard that the process of liberalizing the curriculum is unduly retarded by departmental regulations and by the nature of departmental examination requirements. Nothing is further from the truth; for under the regulations governing the tenure of junior free places the only compulsory subjects are physical instruction, English, arithmetic or practical mathematics, history and civics, and a science elective. If schools allot the minimum requirements of time to these subjects, they will still be left with no fewer than fourteen hours weekly out of, say, twenty-five hours, during which they may add to this small compulsory core such additional subjects as are desired for further general or special education.

The regulations governing the tenure of senior free places go even further, in permitting a reduction in the time allotted to compulsory subjects in the third and fourth years at the school of