

We received little general criticism of the aims of the post-primary schools so far as science was concerned. Most of those submitting their opinions considered that the standard of Sixth Form work in science was reasonably satisfactory. Critics were mainly concerned at the size of some science classes, the shortage of fully qualified science teachers, and the difficulties arising, particularly in small schools, from lack of equipment and from staffing conditions which compel a teacher to deal with branches of science lying outside his own special training. Some of these difficulties can be remedied only when a greater number of qualified teachers is available and when the present shortage of buildings has been overtaken. We were assured that the Education Department was aware of the present difficulties and we note that the recently instituted post-primary school teachers' bursaries provide a means of encouraging well-qualified men and women to enter the teaching profession. Specialization to the extent we have already considered desirable, and with the safeguards we have mentioned, can be properly provided only when there is a regular flow into our schools of teachers equipped for the task they set out to do.

To examine fully the courses available in post-primary schools would take us outside our order of reference. We note, however, that there is still room for expansion of biological science in boys' schools, and in some girls' schools there is need for the inclusion of physics as an optional subject. We agree whole-heartedly with those who maintain that pupils intending to study science at the University should spend two years in Sixth Form work.

We gave some attention to the question of whether more pupils should be encouraged to specialize in science at the Sixth Form stage. While we would urge that a reasonable proportion of pupils of first-class ability should be attracted to the study of science, we do not consider that, on the whole, any urgent action is at present called for. Pupils choose their subjects in Form VI for a variety of reasons—among others, because of the options offered in the school, because a particular subject has fired their imaginations, and because of their proposed future career. We think that the schools would be unwise to encourage a too romantic approach to science and to hold out too much hope of a career in scientific research. Only a small proportion of pupils studying science are capable of becoming first-class research workers on completion of a University course, and too much stress on the possibility of such work, particularly in the early stages, may lead only to disappointment. There are, nevertheless, many kinds of employment where average ability in science may be exercised, and we were more than once reminded of the need for a better supply of technicians. We are far from suggesting, however, that science-teaching in post-primary schools should be regarded as a narrow technical training. We would, indeed, go so far as to say that any tendency in this direction should be discouraged.

2. UNIVERSITY COLLEGES

We have adopted the view that the function of the University in the preparation of scientists is to provide a general education and a training in the principles of science. Those who expressed opinions agreed that the training at present provided was by and large satisfactory for the ordinary or average student. They were less unanimous about the opportunities offered to the student of superior ability. We have shown elsewhere that in certain branches of science the shortages of graduates are more acute than in others. With certain exceptions, however, the shortages are not due to lack of facilities for training.

The problems of the University colleges have been great in the post-war years, and accommodation and staffing have been far below reasonable requirements. Recent increases in the Government grant should enable the worst of these difficulties to be alleviated within the next few years. It would, however, be surprising if, under the present overcrowded conditions, the standard of teaching has been all that University teachers themselves desire.