

SESSION II.

1906.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

[In continuation of E.—5, 1905.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM THE TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

SATISFACTORY progress continues to be made by controlling authorities in the various education districts in respect of matters connected with manual and technical instruction. In several centres in which more or less adequate provision for instruction was already made, the work of elaborating and extending facilities for efficient instruction adapted to the varying needs of the community has proceeded vigorously throughout the year with the assistance of Government grants. The efforts thus made have resulted in a marked improvement, not only in the range and character of the instruction, but also in the efficiency of the accommodation and equipment for classes. It is true that much remains to be done, yet it may be said that the larger technical and art schools are, as far as available funds and other circumstances will allow, slowly but surely becoming institutions worthy of the important work for which they are designed. During the year provision has also been made by the Government for the erection and equipment of buildings in several centres which hitherto have been without any adequate facilities for manual and technical instruction, and in which a well-grounded demand for such instruction has been manifested. On the whole it may be said that good use has been made of the facilities provided; especially has this been so in the case of the central schools for the instruction of school-children in cookery and wood-work, which are now in operation in several education districts.

A feature of the year's work has been the successful establishment in certain centres of day technical classes. The formation of these classes is the direct outcome of the provision made by the Government for free technical education. There is little doubt that these classes will have a distinctly beneficial effect on the work of the evening classes, if only for the reason that graded courses of work rather than isolated classes are an important feature of them. The sooner those in charge of technical classes are able to see their way to break away altogether from the idea of the class for this or that subject, and to substitute therefor the idea of graded courses adapted to this or that industry or pursuit, the sooner will the technical schools be in a position to fulfil their proper functions to a greater extent than is now possible. It is gratifying to note that in spite of the many real difficulties in the way the efforts now being made in this direction have not been altogether without avail. In the larger centres, especially, not a little has been accomplished in the way of providing more or less complete courses in mechanical and electrical engineering, and in plumbing and other subjects connected with the building trade.

There are signs, too, that employers are beginning to realise here, as they are realising in the Old Country, that it is to their advantage to encourage their employees to avail themselves of the opportunities now being provided for systematic instruction in the principles that underlie the various trades and industries, and that those who have received such instruction compare not unfavourably with those who have not. To the realisation of these important facts is probably due the increased interest that many local bodies and associations are now taking in the institutions devoted to technical instruction. Further evidence of this interest is to be found in the steadily increasing amounts paid by the Government by way of subsidies on voluntary contributions to technical classes.

1—E. 5.