

introduce some method of reform in this direction, but at the present juncture I am reluctantly unable so to do. I hope that ultimately it will be possible to institute a travelling school hospital on similar lines to that in existence in New South Wales, where it is staffed by two doctors, one nurse, and one dentist, and follows the Medical Inspector of Schools in isolated districts.

The need for the introduction of dental inspection in schools has been brought prominently under my notice, and reports received from members of the medical and dental professions show an appalling condition of the state of the teeth of many pupils which should not be allowed to continue. I hope the time is not far distant when it will be possible for the Department to establish dental clinics in various parts of the Dominion so as to make some provision for the free treatment of school-children. Something more than mere inspection in this connection is required. The health of children being largely dependent on good teeth, treatment of dental caries must be undertaken. Some Hospital Boards have already given free dental treatment to school-children, and I hope to see their example widely followed. When such free treatment is provided for, parents should be compelled, where necessary, to see that their children receive the benefits of the facilities offered.

Had there been a complete school medical and dental system in operation in years gone by, it is certain that there would not have been the large number of military rejects on account of bodily defects, bad teeth, defective eyesight, &c., which the military medical examinations have recently revealed. Medical inspectors have been instructed not only to inspect the children, but wherever possible to give lectures or lessons to parents or children on proper diet, care of the teeth, brush drill, and on general hygiene.

Open-air Schools.

In view of the benefits derived, especially by weakly children, from open-air schools, I have made wide investigations concerning the various ways of working the system.

In several districts in New Zealand teachers have this year made more frequent use of playgrounds and sheltered open spaces for the purposes of class teaching. In addition, we have in Wellington an open-air-school building which has been in use for some time. Reports just to hand show very striking improvements in the health, height, and weight of the children taught in the open air as compared with those taught inside. Teachers and scholars alike express a distinct preference for the open-air section of the school. I hope to arrange for further extensions of this type of school.

If more money is made available, I hope to arrange for a more complete staff of medical inspectors and also to secure the services of school nurses, who could follow up the work of the school doctors so as to ensure that proper remedial or preventive measures are taken on the basis of the medical report. They would thus form the link between the school and the home.

Country Schools.

It is a source of continual regret that to the hardships and disabilities of the country settler, who is developing our richest natural resources, there is added the lack of proper facilities for the education of his children. There seems to be only one solution for many of the difficulties surrounding the country-school problem. We need to group small schools wherever possible. Instead of setting up small, ineffective schools generally under untrained, uncertificated teachers, we could have central schools well equipped and staffed, where Inspectors could give more than double the time they now find possible. Though conveyance of the children has, in the past, presented difficulties, the matter would be much simplified if the whole of the children at a small school had to be conveyed. Numbers would make the system payable.

If only one Board would make one experiment in this direction, its success, guaranteed by the experience of Canada and other countries, would be sufficient to cause a widespread adoption of the system. The children would benefit, not only educationally but physically, owing to the method of travelling in covered conveyances in bad weather. I have indicated in a previous paragraph my views on the subject of agricultural education.