

REPORT.

IN educational matters considerable progress has been made during the past year, and a number of reforms are in hand which it is expected will still further improve the education system and administration in the Dominion.

JUNIOR-HIGH-SCHOOL COURSE.

This is one of the most far-reaching reforms in education that have been undertaken in New Zealand. It involves a recognition of the world-wide opinion of educationists that, consequent on the extension of facilities for secondary and advanced education, the old boundary limit of the primary school is placed too far on in the pupil's course, and that in his interest a rearrangement should be made in the relationship of primary, secondary, and technical education.

Since it may be held that New Zealand gives wider operative facilities for education than almost any other country, and as the people of New Zealand have shown themselves unusually eager to give their children the benefit of these facilities, there is all the more reason why we should adopt the newer arrangement of primary- and secondary-school courses as approved with virtual unanimity by the educationists of English-speaking countries.

Acting on the authority granted in 1922, the Kowhai Junior High School was established in Auckland. This school has now been in operation nearly two years, and from every quarter enthusiastic endorsements of the new system have been expressed. The parents of the children concerned are enthusiastic in their praise of the new system, and would view with positive dismay any suggestion to revert to the older system. Scholars, teachers, Inspectors, and other officers of the Department, and visiting educationists have expressed warm appreciation of the results under the new arrangement of curriculum.

Briefly stated, the system takes into account two most significant factors. The first is that the primary school, with a course arranged up to the Sixth Standard, was designed for pupils who were, with few exceptions, not to proceed beyond the primary-school stage. Consequently the old primary-school course with the Sixth Standard was made to provide as much as possible for the children for whom this course represented an entire education. With the same object the compulsory age of attendance and standard of acquirement was raised as high as possible in order that children might in this stage of education receive as much schooling as could be given. The introduction of the free-place system of secondary instruction has entirely altered this fundamental condition upon which the old primary-school course was based. Now a very large proportion of those who pass the Sixth Standard continue their education at secondary or technical schools, the latest figures showing that over 66 per cent. of such pupils enter upon a post-primary course. The result is that the point of junction between the primary and secondary courses is found to be misplaced, owing to the obvious fact, as stated above, that the Sixth Standard was not originally designed to be a point of junction at all but a final goal. Under the system hitherto in vogue, therefore, a considerable amount of time was misspent in the upper portion of the primary school. The pupils commenced their secondary studies too late in life, and many had to leave the secondary school when they were just fairly entering upon the course and beginning to realize and profit by its advantages.

The other important factor is that educationists all over the world have long agreed that pupils who wish to carry their studies beyond the primary-school stage should commence their secondary studies at about the age of twelve. Under the old high-school system, both in New Zealand and Great Britain, before free secondary education was offered, the vast majority of the pupils in high schools attended private preparatory schools and commenced their secondary studies at about the age of twelve.