

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 10th July, 1925.

I have the honour to present my report on the work of the technical schools and technical high schools as observed by me at my visits of inspection during the year 1924. Wherever it has been found possible each school has been inspected at least twice during the school year, though not necessarily by the same officer on each occasion. At the first inspection, which is made as early in the year as possible, such matters as organization, curriculum, co-ordination of studies, and teaching methods are given special attention, while at the second visit, made towards the end of the year, the session's work is passed in quick review, the work of the pupils presented for senior free places is scrutinized and appraised, and the efficiency of the teachers is discussed with the Director or Principal, so that the Inspectors may be as fully informed as possible from all points of view of the value of the work done by all members of staffs before proceeding to the annual classification and grading of teachers in technical schools.

With the existing staffing of the Inspectorial Branch time does not permit of the issue of a detailed written report on every school after each visit, or even yearly. Opportunity, however, is always taken to discuss fully with the Principals and teachers concerned any points which seem to call for such discussion. At these informal discussions opinions may be expressed much more frankly than would be possible in a written report, and I am sure that the most good can generally be done in this way. Where, however, it is deemed more fitting or, indeed, necessary that written reports should be made, such reports have been issued from time to time. In regard to certain aspects of the work I have to report as follows :—

*Technical High Schools.*—No striking innovations of any kind have to be recorded for the year, but there can be no doubt that steady progress is being made continually. The organization of a large technical high school presents very formidable difficulties. Moreover, each school has its own special class of difficulty to surmount. It requires very much greater effort and skill to organize effectively a mixed school providing for some half-dozen courses of instruction than to do so in the case of a school of similar size organized on the lines of a traditional secondary school. Unfortunately, compromises have to be adopted to a greater extent than one could wish to see, yet in almost every case where adverse criticism has been made of any point of organization or curriculum it has been found on examination that the particular point has had ample consideration, so that the course adopted has been the best practical solution.

In my report for 1923 certain criticisms were made of the teaching of certain subjects, and suggestions were made for the betterment of such teaching.

Without traversing again the same ground as in that report, it may be said that though something has been done to comply with the suggestions made therein the criticisms noted must, on the whole, still be applied to last year's work.

The main defects of the curriculum now, as before, are in the lack of æsthetic education and education for the leisure side of life. Too little attention is given to drawing, music, dramatic and literary work of such a kind as would ensure that a delight in the liberal arts might become a possession for life for at least some of the pupils passing through our schools. The utilitarian aspect is too much emphasized, and too often, it is feared, a lifelong apathy engendered in those who have suffered from the courses presented to them.

It is also surprising and much to be regretted that even where schools are favourably situated no attention is paid to country lore or to becoming acquainted with the native fauna or flora of which such wonderful stores are in many cases close to hand.

To the matters of drill, sports, and games, organizations into houses with inter-house competitions, school and class magazines, practically all schools devote great attention and a reasonable amount of time, while in many debating and photographic societies are organized with good effect. In the older schools a good school spirit is being steadily developed, evidence of which is to be found in the activities, social and athletic, of the old boys and girls of the schools, and their readiness to help their Alma Mater in all good works.

*Technical Schools.*—At the larger centres complete courses in mechanical engineering, marine engineering, electrical engineering, cabinetmaking, and joinery are held. These courses require attendance on four nights per week, and in some cases five nights per week, and the attendance at such courses is surprisingly good. In order to avoid overlapping with the work of the Universities a working agreement has in some instances been made by the authorities concerned whereby the work is suitably divided between the technical school and the University. Good attention is given to plumbing, the work done being generally of a very high standard. Apprentices, however, often attempt to complete the requirements for the registration examination in too short a period, instead of attending regularly over the whole of their apprenticeship, as they should be required to do, and it is to this reason, rather than to any lack of apparatus and teaching-power provided, that must be attributed the poor showing made in the registration examinations to which attention has once again been drawn. The remedy would seem to lie in the holding of the examination in two or more parts, each of which had to be taken at definite—say, yearly—intervals.

The class in typography held at the Christchurch Technical School has again an excellent year's work to its credit, and it is refreshing to find that similar classes are being established in Auckland. It is hoped that the other large centres will follow suit.

Commercial work accounts for a very large number of pupils at all the technical schools, where in most cases a good course, comprising shorthand, typewriting, book-keeping, and at least English and mathematics, is insisted upon. In the higher branches of book-keeping and accountancy there are some excellent classes, and very earnest and painstaking work is done, the aim generally being the Professional Accountants' Examination of the University of New Zealand. A large number of