

## APPENDIX C.

### REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

#### AUCKLAND.

On the 31st December last the total number of public schools in operation was 753, an increase of twelve on the previous year's total. Forty private schools, inclusive of Roman Catholic diocesan schools, were inspected.

#### PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION.

A similar method to that of the previous year was adopted in connection with the examination of Standard VI pupils for the award of certificates of proficiency and competency. During the latter part of November and during December most of the schools were visited by Inspectors, who conducted the usual examination and granted certificates thereon. In certain schools pupils were accredited on the results of their year's work as evidenced by headmasters' periodical examinations. In such cases the pupils were given to understand early in the year that the reward of regular attendance, a keen spirit of work, good conduct, and conscientious and successful effort would be the granting of a certificate without examination. The headmasters concerned report very favourably on the method adopted and on the stimulating effect resulting therefrom; they also favour the system as tending to raise their professional status in the eyes of both pupils and parents. Under sufficient safeguards the system might reasonably be extended; many teachers, however, mark too leniently, and their estimate of the pupil's capabilities cannot be accepted. The Standard VI scholars in schools remote from large centres were examined by the synchronous method. Questions were set by the Inspectors; the pupils attended at a central school and were examined under the supervision of the head teacher of such school, who also awarded marks for reading, and forwarded the papers to the Inspectors. We feel that this synchronous examination is to some extent unsatisfactory, as the Inspector has not the opportunity of getting into personal touch with those examined; but the time that would be thus expended can be used by the Inspectors to better advantage. Another defect for which we shall this year seek some remedy is the unduly high marks awarded for reading by some of the teacher supervisors.

The Proficiency work submitted was in the large schools and in many of the smaller ones of very good quality.

We desire to point out that in our opinion the Proficiency Examination occupies too large a place in the teacher's and the child's perspective. The result is that nearly all our schools are "type" schools: they conform almost without exception to a definite plan in organization, management, curriculum, and methods. Little real initiative is displayed or experimentation attempted even in a large city school. We have a syllabus that lays claim to the encouragement of initiative, and we have teachers that are more or less willing to experiment, but looming large at the end of the primary course is the Proficiency Examination. The pupil's whole school career, and to some extent his subsequent one, depend upon his being able to measure up to this standardized test—to fail to do so usually means the termination of school education altogether. Small blame can therefore be laid on the conscientious headmaster who so organizes, manages, and teaches that his pupils may qualify for further State education. The remedy appears to be to abolish altogether the examination at the age of fourteen, and to substitute therefor a test given two years earlier—not to determine whether a child shall or shall not have further education, but to determine the kind of education from which he is most likely to profit. Something in this direction has already been done by the establishment of the junior high school, and in the spread of this movement lies the improvement of the primary-school system.

#### CLASSIFICATION AND PROMOTION OF PUPILS.

Headmasters in general exercise care and judgment in the promotion of their pupils. In many of the smaller schools, however, especially in those taught by inexperienced and relatively inefficient teachers, pupils are found who are hopelessly at sea through a want of knowledge of the lower-class work. An inspection of such a teacher's marking of the periodical examination-papers leads one to the conclusion either that the teacher's standard is too low or that he is too anxious to placate parents by the liberal award of promotions. In nearly all schools, moreover, teachers still make their promotions at only one time during the year. Even in the largest schools it is rare to find pupils promoted in the standard classes during the year. It is recognized by all such teachers that primer pupils should be promoted to a higher class so soon as they are sufficiently forward in their work to warrant such promotion, and now such pupils are seldom retarded.

This retardation of the bright pupils is a much more serious evil than the retardation of the duller ones. Inspectors cannot help thinking that the non-promotion of bright pupils is due in large measure to the fact that head teachers, and class teachers also, with the grading scheme ever in view, are keen to make a good showing of their pupils before the Inspectors on what they incorrectly term "examination" day. With the increased staffing allowed by the recent regulations, and with the remodelling of many of our large schools, we hope to find that headmasters will be able to deal in a more modern fashion with the interesting problem of "acceleration" and "retardation."