

1. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 16th May, 1925.

We have the honour to present our report for the year 1924.

In the early portion of the year inspection visits were paid to Palmerston North Boys', Palmerston North Girls', New Plymouth Boys', New Plymouth Girls', Auckland Grammar, Auckland Girls' Grammar, Wellington College, Wellington Girls' College, and Wairarapa and Marlborough High Schools. Three of these schools have staffs of twenty-nine or thirty teachers each, and a full week is barely adequate for a thorough inspection of such large institutions. In addition a few registered private schools were inspected, chiefly in Auckland, but it has been found impossible to inspect as many of these as had been hoped.

The sittings of the Appeal Board were also attended in March. The Board again sat, as last year, in Wellington and Auckland only; two appeals were heard in the former place and only one in the latter. Eleven teachers in all appealed against their classification; one appeal was allowed by consent, one was allowed by the Appeal Board, two were disallowed, and the remaining seven were withdrawn. As the number of assistant teachers graded was just under 450, it is evident that there is no great measure of dissatisfaction with the application of the grading scheme.

In the latter part of the year the whole of the thirty-five secondary schools were visited in connection with the accrediting for senior free places and leaving-certificates. In the case of the majority of these schools this visit gave the Inspectors their only opportunity of observing the teachers at work and so forming the estimate of their efficiency which later was to serve as the basis of the annual classification. Were it not for the ready and impartial assistance given by the Principals in assessing the relative efficiencies of members of their staffs it would be almost impossible to undertake the grading with such meagre time available. In connection with the free places, recommendations have been dealt with on the lines described in former reports. As a result of the Inspectors' investigations senior free places were awarded in accordance with clause 7 (c) to 2,900 candidates; the total number of candidates eligible for recommendation was 3,658, the number recommended by Principals being, of course, considerably smaller. Some 485 higher and sixty-six lower leaving-certificates were also issued on the Inspectors' recommendations.

In connection with the secondary-school certificates issued by the Department there is a feeling that the present system of nomenclature is not altogether satisfactory. It is confusing and misleading to parents and the general public, inasmuch as the "intermediate" certificate suggests a standard between those required for the "lower" and "higher" leaving-certificates; the "lower" certificate is accordingly regarded with little favour and its value misinterpreted by the public. We would suggest the following as a better gradation of titles: "Junior secondary," "senior secondary," and "higher secondary" certificates; or, alternatively, "junior leaving," "senior leaving," and "higher leaving."

As in the past, some of the more remote schools have continued to experience difficulty in obtaining teachers to fill vacancies on their staffs. One girls' school, for example, advertised three times for an A grade assistant, and ultimately appointed a B grade teacher to the position. It may be added that the position is more acute in respect to appointments in the higher grades. There is evidence that the supply of young qualified teachers is becoming less unequal to the demand, and consequently very few schools have had difficulty in making suitable appointments to D grade positions. As is to be expected, the "waiting-list" of teachers in the higher grades continues to increase steadily; the latest classification list shows that fifty-four A, thirty-three B, and forty-one C grade teachers were in December last holding positions of a lower grade than their own—the corresponding numbers in the preceding year being forty-one, twenty-three, and forty. It is significant that 55 per cent. of the teachers on this list were employed in the ten city schools, but that, on the other hand, out of the twenty teachers who had succeeded in obtaining positions in a grade higher than their own, only four were to be found in these schools. These figures simply emphasize the fact that opportunities for promotion continue to be more numerous in the smaller centres.

The list of approved text-books has continued to exert a wholesome influence on the choice of books and to restrict that tendency towards a too lavish expenditure which has hitherto been apparent in a few schools. Considerable amendments to the list were made early in the year and it is probable that in the coming year a revised and somewhat less extensive list will be issued. It may be added that in several schools permission has been given to try out a new book on a restricted scale.

The Dalton plan met with even less encouragement than in the preceding year: the few experiments remaining at the close of 1923 disappeared from the programmes of all schools in 1924. It is to be observed, however, that a few teachers continue to use a modified form of the plan with individual classes, especially in such subjects as mathematics and history.