

REPORT.

INTRODUCTORY AND GENERAL.

It can confidently be stated that during the past year there has been a further substantial increase of efficiency in the working of the educational system. Methods of teaching are being modernized, and school buildings have been greatly improved, not only by the erection of new buildings, but through remodelling old schools to secure better heating, lighting, and ventilation.

Outstanding Features.—Among the events of last year were the sitting of the University Commission and the review of post-primary education by Mr. F. Tate, Director of Education, Victoria, in association with the Director of Education of New Zealand. It is hoped that legislative effect will soon be given to most of the recommendations contained in the report of the University Commission. If this be done there is every reason to expect that the University of New Zealand will enter upon a new and more favourable stage of its history and progress.

Connected with this matter is the projected establishment of a University School of Agriculture near the centre of the North Island. It is expected that with the co-operation of the Auckland and Victoria University Colleges already so freely given, and with that of various trusts in the North Island which have the power substantially to assist the new institution, there will be a marked advance in University education and research in agriculture.

The inquiry above referred to an experiment which has been made of establishing one of each type of junior high school that might be required if the system were generally introduced into New Zealand. While the results of the establishment of these schools is being observed, a complete report is being made in order to show what would be involved in expenditure and administration in introducing the junior-high-school system generally if the principle were adopted as a Dominion policy.

It is not expected that the cost of introducing the system throughout New Zealand would be much, if any, in advance of the present cost. As far as buildings are concerned it must be remembered that the same number of pupils would have to be accommodated whatever the system might be. The junior-high-school system would merely redistribute the pupils without requiring any final increase of accommodation. It is quite possible that in some places accommodation in anticipation of present needs would have to be provided. In the course of about ten years, however, the aggregate expenditure on buildings would not be increased, because the growing needs of the Dominion would rapidly absorb any small amount of accommodation that might not be fully utilized during the transition suggested.

The cost of salaries under the new system would be about the same as at present, probably the chief item of increased expenditure would be the cost of conveyance of Fifth and Sixth Standard pupils from schools in the near neighbourhood to junior high schools.

Steps have already been taken to have a review made of the courses of practical pre-vocational or vocational training that should be provided in technical day schools for children up to the age of fifteen or sixteen, and, on the other hand, older students attending night classes in trade subjects. It is hoped that as a result of securing the approval of those engaged in the various trades, industries, and various forms of commerce it will be possible to secure for both day and evening pupils a certified recognition of a successfully completed course. This should provide greater inducement to students to take up such courses, and, better still, continue in them until the course is completed. The establishment of such courses approved by the educational and industrial authorities would also make easy of solution the difficult question of what equipment and apparatus is required in the schools.

For the past year the Department has been engaged on and will shortly issue new and revised courses and syllabuses governing the work in the first two years of the post-primary schools. These syllabuses will enable the schools to offer improved rural, technical, and other courses, giving better preparation for the life needs of the pupils. The revised courses provide for a more liberalized and broadened education in agreement with modern educational development.

In December last a comprehensive survey was made of the work done in certain fundamental parts of the primary-school curriculum by means of standardized achievement tests. The results, which will be published shortly in pamphlet form,