

and failed by their estimates as many as 50 per cent. of a large Standard VI. The chief weaknesses in the marking by head teachers was in the assessment of oral reading and composition. The range of marks in both these subjects was frequently far too narrow, and the estimates too high.

#### *Experimental Education.*

*Canterbury.*—Our hopes that the introduction of the new syllabus would embolden teachers to show more initiative and individuality in their methods have to a large extent been disappointed. There was more timidity and hesitation than we expected, but there were some good reasons behind the policy which teachers adopted. The feeling that drastic changes in the educational system of the Dominion were imminent made some adopt a wait-and-see attitude. Some were hampered by lack of equipment; others felt that their plans were not mature enough to launch in the first year; while a considerable number doubted their ability to make a successful departure from familiar routine. Only a small minority introduced secondary subjects into their curricula. French was the most popular optional subject, and it was more often taken in country than in city schools. As a rule, some form of the direct method was adopted, and where the teacher was enthusiastic the pupils were most interested and made really good progress. Latin was taught in a few, algebra, practical geometry, and elementary book-keeping in more; and it was often in country schools that most progress was made. In class organization and classroom methods, however, we are glad to be able to record a considerable advance. It is now a common experience to find children working in groups, and individual children busy with some self-imposed project or a contract mapped out by the teacher. This was indicative of a general tendency this year to get away from the older purely instructional methods and to work more along lines of auto-education. This and a generally broader treatment adopted in some subjects indicates a more wholesome conception of what the term "education" implies.

#### *Retardation.*

*Canterbury.*—The classification of pupils is being considered on much more scientific lines than hitherto. Departmental investigations into the question of retardation have directed attention to the causes, and, as a result, most head teachers make a close study of the school history of their pupils, and are thereby enabled to classify them with less chance of error than hitherto. We are glad to record also that the rapid promotion of bright pupils is becoming much more common than formerly. We are still of the opinion expressed last year that such promotions are better made below Standard IV, and that there is a distinct loss of culture in shortening the time spent in Forms I and II. An enriched Form I course for bright pupils is more profitable than promoting them to Form II before their cultural programme has been covered.

#### *Probationary Assistants.*

*Auckland.*—One of the most noticeable features of school-work is the enthusiasm of the ex-trainee. Such enthusiasm constitutes a happy augury for the future, and adds to administrators a responsibility properly to encourage, direct, and mould this teaching-power. A somewhat serious criticism must be made of the organization of our larger city schools. This is the practice of placing probationary assistants in charge of composite classes made up for the most part of the difficult cases from two standard classes. Such a group can be successfully taught only by a teacher of some experience. A year with a problem class tends to destroy a young teacher's confidence in his ability, and his faith in the children—two vital factors in his work if it is to be successful.

*Taranaki.*—In keeping with the improvement noted in reference to the type of probationer offering, the students from the training colleges have shown a distinct improvement within recent years. The great majority of them adjust themselves quickly to the needs of the practical work, and only in a few sole charge schools do any serious difficulties arise.

*Nelson.*—The probationary assistants placed in our schools all qualified for trained teachers' certificates. In many cases, the work they did during the year compared well with that of older and fully qualified assistants.

*Southland.*—In schools of Grade V or higher a certain difficulty has been experienced in restricting the classes allotted to probationary assistants to a reasonable size without unduly burdening others of the assistants. Since the training of the probationary assistants is not regarded as completed until the end of the year, it is, of course, not to be expected that they can teach a large class efficiently; about thirty-five pupils is, in our opinion, the maximum number that should be entrusted to a probationary assistant. The headmasters recognize their obligations to these trainees in initiating them in the routine of practical teaching methods, in instilling into them a conception of what constitutes a good standard of work, and in guiding their efforts generally. The best proof of the success of this training is the fact that most headmasters are very unwilling to part with their probationary assistants at the end of the year.

*Hawke's Bay.*—The probationary assistants did very promising work, and under the direction of the headmasters put into successful operation the ideas gained during their term at the training colleges, the pleasing quality of their work being a clear index to the training they received while there.

#### *Probationers.*

*Wanganui.*—The head teachers are carrying out the instruction and training of the probationers in a satisfactory manner. In some cases we think a fuller and more helpful criticism of the special lessons given by the probationers might be made. In most cases the probationers show themselves enthusiastic in carrying out their duties, and they generally show to good advantage when they have received the year's training and experience.

*Hawke's Bay.*—The headmasters and their staffs have given a thorough training to the probationers throughout the district, with the result that only three were not qualified to enter the training college.