

APPENDIX A.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

During the year there have been a number of changes in the personnel of the Inspectorate. At the beginning of the year there were forty-four Inspectors, and at the end forty-three. In February the Department and the Service sustained a very severe loss by the sudden death, on the eve of his retirement, of Mr. C. W. Garrard, B.A., late Senior Inspector at Auckland. Seven Inspectors—Messrs. M. McLeod, B.A. (Christchurch); G. Dalglish, B.A. (Nelson); F. G. A. Stuckey, M.A. (Dunedin); M. Lynskey, M.A. (Nelson); A. Crawford, B.A. (Wanganui); J. J. Adams, B.A. (Wanganui); and G. H. Plummer, LL.B. (Auckland)—retired on superannuation after long and valuable service in the cause of education. Mr. J. Robertson, B.A., B.Sc., was appointed Senior Inspector at Auckland; Mr. A. McNeil, M.A., Senior Inspector at Christchurch; Mr. D. McCaskill, B.A., Senior Inspector at Napier; Mr. W. A. Service, M.A., Senior Inspector at Invercargill; Mr. W. G. Blackie, M.A., B.Sc., Senior Inspector at Wanganui; and Mr. T. J. Griffin, B.A., Senior Inspector at Nelson. Mr. N. H. S. Law was transferred, at his own request, from Wanganui to Auckland. The following new appointments were made from the primary-school service: Messrs. P. G. Lewis, M.A. (Wanganui); R. W. D. Maxwell, M.A., Dip. Ed. (Dunedin); A. R. Merrington, M.A. (Wanganui); G. T. Palmer, M.A. (Invercargill); E. Partridge, M.A. (Wanganui); G. H. Stubbs, M.A. (Wellington); and J. P. Hawke, M.A. (Taranaki).

Towards the end of the year Mr. W. W. Bird, M.A., Chief Inspector of Primary Schools since 1926, expressed a wish to retire on superannuation, but in view of his unique knowledge of the Maori race and the island people it was decided to retain his services in another position, that of Superintendent of Native and Island Education. Mr. Bird's experience as an Inspector of Native Schools, and as a Senior Inspector of Public Schools in two education districts, made him a particularly valuable administrative officer.

While the standard of efficiency in the large schools has been well maintained, a distinct advance is recorded in country schools, more particularly in the backblocks. This is accounted for by the disappearance of uncertificated teachers, whose places have been taken by young trained teachers, who by their skill and enthusiasm have transformed the school life of large numbers of country children.

As stated last year, it is not expected that any radical changes will result from the introduction of the new syllabus. What is looked for is the gradual growth of the spirit of liberty as far as methods of teaching and courses of work are concerned. It may be too much to expect successful teachers of long experience to abandon well-tried methods which they are applying with a minimum of effort. Nevertheless, many of the teachers show originality in the compilation of programmes of work and have adopted means of giving scope for individual effort in conjunction with class-teaching. The study of modern developments in education in other lands is undertaken seriously by every progressive teacher, and this study, while not leading to a revolution in methods, at least is gradually paving the way for the adoption of the best. In general, teaching methods are modern, and tend to develop the individuality of the pupils as far as working-conditions in the schools permit. There are still some traditional methods of doubtful educational value that survive as being effective with large classes or with teachers who, while striving for freedom, are afraid to leave the well-worn paths and seek new avenues; this, too, in spite of the spirit of the new syllabus and the encouragement given by Inspectors to teachers showing originality and initiative. There is reluctance to abandon a sure method—that is, one sure to produce good measurable results—for a plan that may show poor results on a formal test. Younger teachers are more exploratory in the realms of methods than many older ones who have very fine records in the Service. Might it be suggested that these latter, with their success in control, management, and organization, need have no fear of failure under the new system.

It is in the matter of discipline that there has been the most noticeable change for the better, attributable to a closer observation of the temperament and study of the psychology of the child. The habits of self-control inculcated in the preparatory classes were until recently sometimes nullified by inexperienced teachers in charge of Standards I and II, but headmasters have now realized that greater efficiency of the school as a whole is gained with capable teachers in charge of these classes. Advance along æsthetic paths is distinctly encouraging, notable progress having been made in singing, more particularly in the production of pleasing tone. Musical appreciation has some capable exponents among the teachers; others are finding their way to better treatment. Literary appreciation is making rather tardy progress, but artistic drawing and handwork are more in evidence. Teachers are, however, sometimes reluctant to spend time on what appears not to give immediate testable results, overlooking entirely the fact that oral and written expression will through these branches of the curriculum rise to a practical and æsthetic standard hitherto considered impossible. Our schools hardly receive enough credit for the interest displayed by both teachers and pupils in what may be called social and civic activities. Most schools have branches of one or more of the following—Junior Red Cross, Dr. Barnardo's Young Helpers' League, Navy League, S.P.C.A.—in which the pupils take a keen and active interest.