

The number of senior free places granted to pupils from departmental secondary schools on the Principal's recommendation has shown a slight increase—3,655 were granted as against 3,489 in 1930 and 3,448 in 1929. Of the candidates who failed to obtain free places by accrediting, 594 sat for the Intermediate examination in November; ninety-one of these, a little over 15 per cent., succeeded in passing.

Higher leaving certificates, giving the holder the highest normal qualification for appointment to a probationership in the primary-school service, and also entitling him, if the certificate is obtained before reaching the age of nineteen, to a University Bursary, continue to be granted by a system of accrediting. The number awarded in 1931 was exceptionally large, as was only to be expected from the abnormal size of the Sixth Forms in the larger centres. Certificates were awarded to as many as 978 pupils from departmental and to 186 from endowed and registered private secondary schools, as against 718 and 159 in the preceding year and 708 and 126 in 1929. The demand for lower leaving certificates, also awarded by accrediting, has practically ceased to exist; only three were awarded, as against forty-two in 1930.

The question of the reorganization of the whole-system of school leaving certificates has remained in abeyance for still another year. The matter has not been overlooked, but the attention of the administrative staff has been so much occupied with the difficulties and the problems arising from the financial stringency that little time could be spared for devising a scheme that would surmount the difficulties referred to in my last report.

Opposition to the proposed system of partial accrediting for University entrance has not decreased during the past year, and the former supporters of the change have apparently relapsed into an attitude of indifference in the matter. The chief stumbling-block lies undoubtedly in the undisguised hostility of the English Universities towards any system of selection other than that of examination. Possibly also their hostility has not been diminished by the reports concerning the results of the system of complete accrediting that obtains in many parts of the United States. It is hardly necessary to point out once more the obvious differences between the American practice and the procedure proposed for New Zealand. All that remains to be said is that for the present accrediting for University entrance has ceased to be a matter of interest to our educationists.

In connection with the training of secondary-school teachers it is pleasing to note that the Auckland secondary schools have now fallen into line with those in the other training-college centres in providing opportunities for observation and teaching practice to selected training-college students. The technical district, and junior high schools in the four centres also continue to assist in a like manner. The system is by no means an ideal one, but much good is nevertheless being accomplished under the present arrangement. The thanks of the Department are undoubtedly due to those Principals and heads of departments who, in a purely honorary capacity, have ungrudgingly given of their time to assisting and advising the students.

The number of new entrants into the ranks of secondary-school teachers in 1932 was much smaller than usual; only thirty-one (nineteen men and twelve women) as against fifty-nine in the preceding year. Seventy-five per cent. of the women entrants and 79 per cent. of the men had passed through a training-college course. Only 19 per cent. of the entrants had had neither previous teaching nor training-college experience. The situation in respect to the training of secondary-school teachers is obviously much more satisfactory than it was some fifteen years ago, when the majority of entrants were wholly untrained and no facilities for practice were available in the secondary schools.

It is pleasing to record that a considerable number of teachers display marked keenness in continuing their University and professional studies. In the majority of cases the necessity of obtaining an honours degree or its equivalent has no doubt been a compelling factor, but there are not a few instances where teachers have been dissatisfied with the utility of the subjects in which they have obtained their degrees, and have taken up University work in subjects more useful to them in their teaching; others have studied for the Diploma of Education or have taken an additional degree in commerce. Others again have gone further afield, and have travelled to Europe or to America, in some cases to pursue a definite course of study, usually in France or in England, and in others to broaden their outlook and knowledge by contact with the people and customs of other lands. Not a few of these have interested themselves in foreign educational institutions of various types, and some have furnished the Department with illuminating comments on educational developments abroad. During the past four years no fewer than thirty-five assistant teachers (eleven men and twenty-four women) have availed themselves of the opportunity to travel to Europe or America. It is problematical, however, whether this rate will be maintained in the immediately succeeding years.

Turning to the consideration of the quality and the standard of instruction given in the schools, it is not easy to generalize over a large range of subjects taught with different degrees of specialization in a variety of schools. Even the methods followed, especially in such subjects as French and geography, agriculture, and history, vary considerably from school to school. The Department has no desire to restrict teachers to any one uniform method of teaching a subject, and it has therefore consistently refrained from issuing detailed directions as to methods and syllabuses. The Inspectors, however, have at all times been able to suggest improvements in methods, to point out the proved deficiencies of some, and to stress the proved success of others after their trial in other schools.

In the majority of schools the general standard in English continued to be very satisfactory, and due attention is given both to literature and to the formal but essential groundwork in grammar. Oral composition is not being neglected; practice in speaking and dramatic work is being given in most schools, and an increasing interest is being taken in the reading of modern plays. In some schools, however, there is still need for greater insistence on good enunciation. With regard to the formal work there is still room for closer co-ordination between the primary and the secondary schools. The primary-school syllabus in English appears to be reasonably satisfactory, but the extent to which it