

REPORT.

I. INTRODUCTORY AND GENERAL.

DURING the year the educational institutions under the control of my Department have made very satisfactory progress in spite of the curtailments in some directions that were rendered necessary by the financial condition of the Dominion.

I wish to take this opportunity of thanking again all those who have been concerned with the control and administration of the schools for their cheerful acceptance of financial restrictions which they realized were imposed by Government only under stress of the imperative necessity for reducing public expenditure to the minimum consistent with the efficient maintenance of essential services; and for the splendid loyalty which they have shown in devising means by which the inevitable economies enforced by the reduction of their incomes have been secured without depriving the children in their care of any major privileges or advantages.

During my visit to the World Conference I had the opportunity of seeing something of the educational systems of England and America. As far as time would permit, I made inquiry into the many aspects presented by education in those countries, and came to the conclusion that, though we are in some respects behind the best practice of the older countries, particularly on the social and humanitarian sides, on the whole the education received by our children compares favourably with that given to the majority of English and American children. When more money is available I propose to give consideration to some features of education that so far have not been fully incorporated into our system. The further extension of the reorganized primary-school system, the establishment of kindergartens in the cities and larger towns, the education and after-care of those less fortunate children who are unfitted to benefit by the ordinary methods and courses of instruction, and the vocational guidance of primary and post-primary pupils, are matters of great importance, awaiting a period of more vigorous development of educational services which will become possible only when financial conditions improve.

At the beginning of the year intermediate schools were established in accordance with the new regulations in Napier and Wanganui, and the West Christchurch District High School was reorganized by transferring the Primer to Standard IV pupils to the neighbouring schools and attaching an intermediate department to the school for the Form I and II pupils of West Christchurch and Addington Schools. Towards the end of the year contracts were let for the erection of new intermediate schools at Shirley (Christchurch) and Albany Street (Dunedin). When these two schools are opened at the beginning of next year there will be five intermediate schools and eleven intermediate departments in the Dominion. Of the eleven departments, six are attached to secondary schools, one to a technical high school, and four to district high schools. At the end of the year 3,806 children were enrolled in intermediate schools and departments. My Department has exerted no compulsion on Boards or parents in regard to the reorganization of the primary-school system. It has aimed at convincing parents that the change is in the interests of their children, so that when the opportunity offers, reorganization may be effected. With the fall in the attendance of many city schools, due in a large measure to the industrialization of the districts in which they are situated, it may be possible to redistribute the pupils and establish more intermediate schools.

During the year special attention has been given to the courses of instruction, with the object of providing more satisfactorily for the various types of pupils. In the past ample provision has been made by the schools for what may be termed the verbally minded pupil, whether or not he is also practically minded—that is, the boy or girl who readily absorbs book-knowledge. The practically minded pupil,