

REPORT.

I. INTRODUCTORY AND GENERAL.

It is with pleasure I am able to report that in the educational institutions under the control of my Department the standard of attainment has been well maintained during the year. The skill and efficiency of the teachers, together with the generous assistance rendered by all the controlling authorities have made it possible to give the pupils an education that should assist them in taking their place in the communities in which they find themselves when they leave school.

Notwithstanding that the economic condition of the Dominion has not yet returned to normal, it has been possible to restore some of the items in educational expenditure that had to be eliminated during the worst years of the depression. From the 1st April the salaries of teachers were increased by 5 per cent. ; the grant for handwork material was restored, and a supply thereof will be made available to the public schools for 1935 ; the incidental expenses of School Committees and of the Boards controlling secondary and technical schools have been increased ; an additional grant was made for the maintenance of school-buildings ; and boarding-allowances to enable children to attend public primary schools were restored.

Since I assumed the portfolio of Education on the 22nd November, 1934, I have given much consideration to a number of the problems connected with my Department with the object of discovering ways and means of initiating reforms that will be of benefit to the pupils and to the teachers.

If the financial position has improved, I hope that next year it will be possible to provide on the estimates additional means for the improvement of the system.

Owing to the number of teachers who were still without permanent positions, it was necessary at the beginning of the year to continue the rationing-scheme, but on a different basis. It was decided to employ full time all teachers who were not in permanent positions instead of employing them for a term as previously. Salary at the rate of £60 per annum, with lodging-allowance, where necessary, at £24 per annum, was paid. From the 1st August it was found possible to raise these rates to £72 and £36 respectively. Such continuous employment was advantageous to these teachers and to the schools—to the teachers because it enabled them to make greater progress in their profession, and to the pupils in that an increased staffing enabled the size of classes to be reduced in many schools.

In February new intermediate schools were opened at Shirley, Christchurch, and at Albany Street, Dunedin. There are now five intermediate schools and eleven intermediate departments in the Dominion.

At the beginning of the year regulations were gazetted in connection with the School Certificate Examination. This is an examination taken at the same stage in a pupil's school career as the University Entrance Examination and equal in difficulty to it. It is intended for those pupils who do not wish to undertake University education but who desire to leave school with tangible evidence that they have undertaken satisfactorily a good course of work in a post-primary school. Pupils can select from thirty-one subjects, nineteen of these being similarly prescribed for the University Entrance Examination. For these nineteen subjects the papers are set by the University of New Zealand. For the other twelve, among which are technical drawing, book-keeping, shorthand and typing, needlework, housecraft, technical electricity, and general biology, the papers are set by the Department. English is the only subject that is compulsory.

The scope of the examination is therefore wider and the choice of the candidate less limited than for the University Entrance Examination. The first examination was held at the end of the year and the result must be regarded as very encouraging. It is not anticipated that the full effect of the opportunity that has been given to pupils to take a wider course of study will be realized for two or three years. Various appointing authorities and examining bodies have notified their willingness to accept the examination in whole or in part for their requirements. But the great merit of this change is that it will enable each and every pupil to select those subjects the study of which will, he thinks, ultimately be of the greatest service to him, and the most in accord with his natural gifts.