

3. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present my report for the year 1934.

GENERAL.

The attendance at technical high schools during the year 1934 was greatly affected by the varying conditions of employment of young people. At the beginning of the year the rolls were increased by larger numbers than usual returning in the higher classes, while towards the end of the year the demand for young employees became very strong and the senior classes in the technical high schools were much depleted. The attendance in evening classes were satisfactory in some courses, but the lack of trade apprentices, of whom very few were indentured during the year, resulted in a further falling off in trade classes, especially in the engineering trades.

BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT, AND APPARATUS.

In most cases the buildings, equipment, and apparatus were sufficient and suitable to the standard so far reached in technical schools and manual-training centres in the Dominion.

On the whole, the buildings and equipment were maintained in fair condition, although it was clear in some cases that only repairs and maintenance of an urgent character were taken in hand. The grounds and playing-fields were, in general, well kept, though the schools were unable to spend so much on them as in former years, when the available allowances for incidental expenses were considerably larger.

In regard to technical equipment and apparatus, it must be admitted that sufficient provision is not made in most of the schools for depreciation and obsolescence.

In regard to technological and art libraries, some little interest was exhibited during the year, but the schools are, as a rule, very ill-provided with books of reference in the various branches of art, science, and technology. One country technical high school received a valuable gift of art books, photographs, and original prints from the Carnegie Corporation during the year, and steps are being taken to have the collection suitably housed in the evening-school building, where it will be easily accessible at set times to the general public as well as to the students of the school.

In the larger technical schools more attention is now being paid to the development of library facilities. A large expenditure of money, time, and energy will, however, be necessary to bring the technical school libraries from their present rudimentary proportions up to the standards ordinarily attained in technical schools in other countries.

Such a development is even more necessary in this Dominion than abroad, owing to its isolation and the comparative lack of large and varied manufacturing industries, and the consequent impossibility of students becoming acquainted by personal experience with many processes and activities easily observable by students in other lands.

It is unfortunate that a real desire to establish reasonably good technological libraries in technical schools did not develop many years ago, when the allowances for incidentals were sufficiently generous to enable Boards to obtain all equipment and books necessary for their work. With the present allowance for incidentals the maintenance of equipment and the establishment and extension of libraries, which cannot be given preference before cleaning, lighting, heating, caretaking, and office expenses, are by no means easily provided for.

It is hoped, however, that difficulties of finance may be overcome and that the technical school authorities will be able to establish for their students satisfactory library facilities in the near future, either individually or in co-operation with one another and with other local authorities.

CLASS MATERIALS.

The cost of necessary materials for class use in both technical and manual-training classes is mainly defrayed by the Boards concerned from the allowance paid by Government on account of incidental expenses. In most cases the Boards appeared to be able to maintain a sufficient supply, part of it being provided by the pupils or their parents, either in cash or in kind.

In the case of materials for science and nature-study in primary schools the allowance towards cost, made as a percentage on the salaries of itinerant instructors, was insufficient, but Education Boards were able to eke it out with the help of the allowance on manual-training classes.

Where the materials used by pupils are converted into goods which are consumed by the pupils or removed by them from the schools there would appear to be little objection to the practice of asking pupils to pay towards the cost of materials, even in classes for primary-school pupils where attendance is compulsory. In all cases instructors in charge of classes have some discretion in this matter and are allowed to excuse children in poor circumstances from contributing in cash or kind.

CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION.

The character of the instruction in technical schools and classes varies with the demand and changes in sympathy with changes in industry and commerce. For example, the recent development of wireless communication and the continued progress of motor transport have led to the development of classes in several centres for radio service and for motor mechanics. More attention has also been given in recent years to training for agricultural pursuits not only in technical schools, but also in several secondary and combined schools.

The proportion of time devoted to general subjects, including English, history and civics, mathematics and science, remains approximately constant in each type of school, being fixed almost