

SECONDARY AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS.

“ From 1907 to 1932 the regulations of the Board of Education (England and Wales) required that every grant-aided secondary school should each year award free places to a number of entrants into the school equal to at least 25 per cent. of the total admissions in the previous year. Some schools were allowed to award a lower percentage, usually 10 per cent. Under the same regulations schools may not award a higher percentage than 50 without the permission of the Board. The minimum of 25 per cent. was reserved for pupils from the public elementary schools. Certain local education authorities, such as Manchester and Bradford, have adopted the principle of free secondary education in schools maintained by them; but places like Birmingham have reached nearly the same result by large remissions of fees according to the needs of the parents.

“ In 1932 the Board of Education modified this system. ‘Free places’ were renamed ‘special places.’ The number was not reduced, but the winning of such a place will not in future entitle the scholar to exemption from fees if the parents’ means are sufficient to enable them to pay. So far as free or special places are concerned, the examination was always intended to be competitive, those highest on the list of marks securing such places. So far as admission to the secondary school is concerned, however, the examination was originally intended to be a qualifying one. It is, however, in fact, severely competitive. The examination is conducted by each local education authority and varies considerably in character in different areas.”

—*The Year-Book of Education, 1934.*

It is now proposed to remove all maximum limits on the number of special places that may be awarded annually.

“ In Scotland it is the duty of the education authority to make adequate provision throughout their area for all forms of primary, intermediate, and secondary education in day schools without payment of fees, and they may, if they think fit, maintain in addition a limited number of schools where fees are charged in some or all of the classes. The arrangements made have to be approved by the Department, who are apparently the judges as to the adequacy of the provision in each area.”

—*The Year-Book of Education, 1934.*

“ The Standard Rates of Tuition Fees in Grant-aided Secondary Schools in England and Wales,” issued by the Board of Education in June, 1933, sets out the fees that may be charged by each local education authority as from 1st April, 1933.

No fees are charged for secondary education in New South Wales, Western Australia, and Tasmania. The other States charge fees up to £9 per annum.

Our regulations provide liberal opportunities for pupils to qualify for further education at secondary, technical, or district high schools, but at present we are not doing enough to help those pupils who cannot afford to avail themselves of the qualification. It is one thing to qualify, but very often quite another to find the money necessary for books, clothing, and maintenance. England and Scotland both set a high value on intellectual attainments, and by means of scholarships, grants, and maintenance and travelling allowances make it possible for poor boys and girls of outstanding ability to enter secondary schools, training colleges, and the Universities.

In 1931 we abolished our junior and senior national scholarships and made legislative provision for the establishment of bursaries for secondary and higher education, and in 1932 we modified the conditions on which University bursaries are awarded. I would suggest that as soon as financial conditions permit—

- (1) Junior scholarships be established for pupils attending primary and intermediate schools, and senior scholarships for pupils attending secondary, technical, and district high schools, and that the following or similar conditions govern the award of the scholarships—namely :—
 - (a) Junior scholarships to be of the value of £5 per annum, and senior scholarships £10 per annum.
 - (b) Part of the junior scholars to be chosen from one-teacher schools.
 - (c) Part (possibly one-quarter) of the scholarships of both stages to be held at technical schools.
 - (d) Scholarships to be tenable at district high schools.
 - (e) Further financial assistance towards the cost of board and lodging, books, travelling-expenses, and clothing to be given, if necessary, to scholarship winners.
- (2) Restoration of the conditions under which University bursaries were formerly granted.
- (3) Further provision for the assistance of necessitous University students of certified ability and diligence.

I believe that our secondary schools are in a large measure well suited to our requirements, and that they have given the majority of their pupils a sound and liberal education. For some of the pupils, however, their curricula have been too academic. The introduction of the school certificate in 1934 should be the means of freeing these schools from the dominance of the University Entrance Examination and of giving them the opportunity of developing other courses of study than the academic one for those pupils who are not aiming at, or are not fitted for, University education. In the smaller towns, where there is no technical school, greater provision should be made as opportunity arises for instruction in handicrafts, manual training, and domestic subjects at the secondary schools.

Our technical schools are developing on sound lines. No school I saw abroad is quite comparable with them. In England and Scotland the term “technical school” implies a school for trade and vocational instruction attended by apprentices and others already employed in the trade, or by those intending to enter a particular trade. In London the junior technical schools provide for children