

LENGTH OF SCHOOL COURSE.

At recent breaking-up ceremonies in our secondary schools attention has not infrequently been drawn by Principals to what is claimed to be a marked tendency on the part of pupils to leave school at too early a stage. That there should be such a tendency is undoubtedly to be deplored, but an investigation of records over a number of years shows that a certain amount of stabilization with regard to it now appears to have been reached. The figures quoted in the table below show that the desire to leave at an early stage has become less pronounced within the last two years. Economic conditions are undoubtedly at the root of any increased urge to leave before the completion of a satisfactory school course, and it is interesting to trace the evident connection between the industrial depression and the longer stay of boys at secondary schools.

The following table shows, for secondary and combined schools only, the percentage of the total roll of boys, of girls, and of all pupils who on the 1st July of each year were (a) in their fourth year or more, (b) in their third-year or more, of secondary schooling :—

	1929.	1930.	1931.	1932.	1933.	1934.	1935.	1936.	1937.	1938.
(a) Boys	16·1	16·7	20·8	24·5	24·0	22·1	19·3	18·5	17·6	17·7
Girls	14·6	14·6	16·3	18·7	18·7	17·1	15·3	15·2	15·5	15·5
Total	15·4	15·7	18·8	21·8	21·6	19·8	17·5	17·0	16·6	16·7
(b) Total	34·8	34·3	38·3	42·3	41·0	37·5	35·7	36·1	35·0	36·2

Salient facts that may be gleaned from the table are, (1) that the percentage of senior pupils was greatest at the peak of the depression (1932 and 1933), (2) that the length of stay at school has varied much more with the boys than the girls, (3) that the proportion of senior pupils has become stabilized and is now somewhat higher than in the pre-depression period of 1929 and 1930. The position, however, cannot be regarded as satisfactory when we find only 36 per cent. of secondary-school pupils receiving education beyond a second year's course.

CONCLUSION.

In general, work in the schools has proceeded satisfactorily, and there is welcome evidence that in the majority of them there is no reluctance to experiment with new subjects of instruction or new methods of treatment when the numerical strength or the qualifications of the staff permit of this being done. Reference has already been made, for example, to the increasing interest in biology and general science.

In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation of the zeal and willing co-operation of my colleagues during the year under review.

I have, &c.,

E. J. PARR,

Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools

The Director of Education, Wellington.

3. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present this, my first report as Superintendent of Technical Education, dealing with the year ending 31st December, 1938.

Mr. O. H. E. Yates, M.A., late Principal of the Masterton Technical School, acted as temporary Inspector of Technical Schools from 16th May, 1938, to 31st January, 1939, during which period he gave efficient and much appreciated service; he resigned to become the Headmaster of the Dunedin North Intermediate School at the beginning of the 1939 session.

Mr R. Hynes, B.Sc. (Eng.), joined the Department on 1st February, 1939, as Inspector of Manual and Technical Instruction; Mr. Hynes had previously held the position of Head of the Engineering Department at the Dunedin Technical School.

Mrs. M. A. Boocock joined the Department on 1st April, 1938, as Supervisor of Domestic Subjects, and Miss D. H. McKenzie, B.H.Sc. as Inspector of Domestic Subjects, on 20th April, 1938. The position now held by Miss McKenzie has been vacant since Miss Dyer left the Service in 1931. There is no doubt that the appointment of women Inspectors and Supervisors of Domestic Subjects is a necessity if these important subjects of girls' education are to be properly guided and expanded. Already much needed help has been given, especially to teachers in isolated places, and the action of the Government in restoring these positions is highly appreciated.

During the year Dr. F. H. Spencer, late Chief Inspector of Schools for the London County Council, visited New Zealand under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York to inquire into and report to the Corporation on the system of technical education in force in New Zealand. Prior to his visit to New Zealand, Dr. Spencer had visited South Africa and Australia for a similar purpose, so that his observations on technical education in New Zealand will be made in the light of a wide and varied background.

Dr. Spencer spent about two months in the Dominion, and visited the technical schools not only in the main centres but also many of those in small country towns. In many places he met the teachers and gave helpful addresses which were much appreciated. His report will be awaited with interest.