

THE WAR.

The war, as is only natural, has continued to affect the daily life of our schools in many ways. Developments in teaching methods and technique have, in the main, been hindered; this is especially the case where books and equipment are concerned, and the position will undoubtedly become worse. Staffing difficulties in the boys' and mixed schools created by the absence of teachers on overseas service have been intensified by the calling-up of many men to serve as officers in the Territorial camps and by the employment of others as education officers by the Air Department. There is already a distinct shortage of qualified teachers of science and mathematics. So far only one woman has been employed on the staff of a boys' school, so that the position in this respect is not as acute as it was at the close of the last war, when there were no fewer than eighteen women assistants in boys' schools.

At the close of the year thirty-four assistants were away on active service, one Principal and thirty assistants were absent on Territorial service, and eleven assistants were temporarily employed by the Air Department as education officers. Incidentally, four Principals of registered private secondary schools were also absent with the Expeditionary Force. In several centres teachers are continuing to render valuable assistance in training recruits for the Air Force in mathematics and physics.

In connection with the war a word of praise is due to secondary-school pupils throughout the country who have continued their patriotic efforts in raising funds, in supplying comforts for the troops, and in making and adapting garments for sufferers through the war, particularly for the Lady Galway Refugee Committees.

CONCLUSION.

As this is the last annual report that I shall have the honour to write, I had intended to give a brief review of the developments in the scope, the technique, and the spirit of secondary-school teaching during the eighteen years I have been Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, together with a survey of the progress of the schools and of the chief administrative developments during the period. I find, however, that this is impossible in the space available to me in these days of paper shortage.

I wish briefly to place on record, however, my firm conviction that there has been a definite, and, on the whole, continuous progress towards more liberal curricula, towards wider freedom of choice in courses, and towards more human methods of securing the interest of the pupil in his work. The old formal methods of teaching English, for example, have disappeared; no longer are children required to learn about poems or other works, and even to criticize them, without knowing them at first hand; a love of reading and an appreciation of good literature have been fostered and encouraged. Throughout the period under review the Inspectors have consistently encouraged this liberalism, especially in such subjects as English, history, geography, and science, and the progress that has been effected is in no small measure due to their persuasion and influence.

One other point to be emphasized is that there has been during the period a very marked improvement in the general standard of efficiency among the teachers; they now enter the service much better equipped than formerly, they appear to be more interested in their work, and they are keener to improve their own efficiency. There is no doubt that as regards quality the schools are better staffed than they were eighteen years ago.

There remain problems to be faced in the future. There is need, for example, for improved methods in our physical training, especially in the boys' schools, and here, no doubt, the valuable help and direction of Mr. Smithells will be available in the near future; the dental examination of pupils should be extended to secondary schools as soon as circumstances permit; financial assistance for libraries is very urgently needed; and the whole question of the organization of vocational guidance needs careful consideration at an early date. No satisfactory solution of the difficult problem of training secondary-school teachers in a scattered community such as ours has as yet been obtained. The School Certificate has not yet received the recognition due to it, nor have secondary-school curricula yet been freed from the domination of the University Entrance Examination. The broadening of curricula and the multiplication of courses in the schools have revealed the need for a more generous staffing scale. The matter of post-primary teachers' salaries and the possibility or desirability of the complete co-ordination of the post-primary branches of education are also questions for the near future. The solutions of some of the above problems were already well on their way when the war, and its attendant financial difficulties, compelled a postponement of their consideration.

Finally, I have to express my sincere appreciation of the loyal co-operation of my colleagues, both present and past, throughout the period in which I have been Chief Inspector.

I have, &c.,

E. J. PARR,
Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools.

The Director of Education.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present my report for the year ending 31st December, 1940.

The inspecting staff remained unchanged throughout the year, except that Mrs. M. A. Boocock, Supervisor of Domestic Subjects, resigned her position as from 30th September. The vacant position has not been filled, but is held in abeyance until such time as transport facilities may be restored so as to enable the Supervisor to visit remote schools where the greatest need of help is felt.

Great inconvenience and undoubtedly some loss of efficiency is occasioned by the fact that the staff inspectors of Technical Schools cannot be accommodated in the Government Buildings, which houses the administrative and clerical staffs. It is true that these officers do spend a considerable time in the field, but the time they spend at headquarters is by no means inconsiderable and is of the greatest possible value only if the closest contact is maintained with the administrative and other officers of the branches to which they are attached. It is freely admitted that all officers concerned have co-operated to the fullest extent in mitigating the inconveniences necessarily inherent in such a division of forces, but they look forward earnestly to the time when they will be reunited in one office building.