

(13) Increased facilities have been provided for manual training—cooking, sewing, woodwork, and metalwork—in primary schools.

(14) Free dental clinic services have been greatly increased, and also extended to secondary schools. In 1944 local parents were freed from having to make a contribution to the cost of clinics.

(15) Free daily milk and free apples in season have been made available to children in nearly all schools, private as well as State.

(16) Since, 1935, 12 new intermediate schools, well housed and equipped, have been established, the equipment of existing schools has been improved, and they have been encouraged to experiment with curricula, methods of teaching, and systems of internal organization adapted to their special needs. With the co-operation of the Education Boards, the Department has made extensive surveys, covering most of New Zealand, with a view to plotting out the best locations for intermediate schools. The extension of the system as conditions permit is definite Government policy. In 1945 three new intermediate schools were established—Epsom Normal, Balmoral, and Avondale.

(17) A very real effort has been made since the abolition of the Proficiency Examination to develop methods of inspection of schools that will give every teacher all the freedom and professional help he can reasonably ask. The Inspectors themselves, freed from the restrictions of a narrow formal test, have been encouraged to become professional leaders in their districts and to adopt a broad and positive attitude in their work. Freedom, I know, cannot be forced on a group, but I am convinced that the new policy is steadily improving the attitude of teachers to their work. The amount of responsible experimentation in teaching methods is increasing every year, and the best schools are now far better than they could ever have been under the rule of the Proficiency Examination and a less positive system of inspection. As far as the children are concerned, the change has shown itself in an increasing amount of pupil activity in the schools, of doing things rather than just learning them from books, and a steadily growing emphasis on the æsthetic side of the child's life. The average school is now a happy place.

I do not foresee any very radical changes in the primary schools over the next five years. The main problem will be to provide grounds, buildings, equipment, and trained staff to carry out fully the policy laid down over the past ten years. All the new advances mentioned above will be pressed forward even more vigorously now that the war is ended. The greatest reform of all, with which nothing else must interfere, is the reduction in the size of classes.

Education of Handicapped Children

The Government has always been particularly solicitous of children suffering from some kind of handicap, physical, mental, or social. Over the past ten years the following improvements have been effected in this field:—

(1) The New Zealand Institute for the Blind has been helped by a Government guarantee to put its finance on a more stable basis, and grants have been made for additional buildings.

(2) In 1940 a highly qualified Principal for the Summer School for the Deaf was brought from England. During the war a branch of the school was, of necessity, started in Auckland. In 1946 this will be made a separate school, and as soon as possible a new permanent building will be provided for it. Special methods have been adopted to train new teachers of the deaf to cater for an increase in the number of pupils that has occurred in recent years.

(3) The number of speech clinics has risen from 4 to 15. Specialist teachers are trained each year for this useful work.

(4) The number of special classes for backward children has doubled since 1935 and is now 50. In 1946 a group of selected teachers will undertake in Christchurch a year of advanced training to fit them for special class work.