

I am in a position to say that the carelessness shown in keeping registers and in preparing and improving schemes of work, on which Mr. Grierson has remarked above, is exceptional, and does not prevail in the districts under the charge of the other Inspectors.

"The dairying industry," Mr. Grierson writes, "is rapidly expanding in the north central district. I append, without comment, a brief statement from which a general idea may be obtained, in the case of a typical school, of its bearing and probable influence on the lives of the pupils.

"Roll-number of Classes S4-S7 .. .. .	38 pupils.
Number of milkers (same classes) .. .. .	18 pupils.
Average number of cows milked per child.. .. .	6 cows.
Average distance from school .. .. .	2 miles.
Average time of starting work .. .. .	5 a.m.
Average time of finishing work .. .. .	7.15 p.m.

"Note.—Seventeen of the eighteen milkers are males. The largest number of cows milked by one child is nine, and the smallest two. One boy of ten years milks eight cows and walks two miles and a half to and from school, respectively."

The Board will no doubt feel much indebted to Mr. Grierson for this interesting and explicit statement. Mr. Stewart has drawn attention to this deplorable evil already, and he thinks its ill-effects, from the teacher's point of view, are due as much to want of sufficient sleep as to the fatigue that must often ensue from such continuous unvaried exertion.

Mr. Plummer suggests that an effort should be made in suitable districts to close a number of smaller schools, and convey the scholars to a larger central school; and he mentions that this plan is working successfully in a few cases in the education districts of the South Island. In two or three instances I have urged on the Board the adoption of this arrangement, but local opposition has been too strong to be overcome. It is, however, highly desirable that the plan should be tried under favourable conditions, as its advantages are obvious enough. Unfortunately, acquiescence on the part of the parents concerned is a very necessary favourable condition, and it has not yet been secured, but it would, I think, be worth a trial, in spite of this drawback, if conditions were otherwise favourable.

Mr. Plummer offers another suggestion that deserves serious consideration. "In the employ of the Board," he says, "there are a number of teachers in charge of small schools who are lacking in experience, but are very anxious to improve in their profession. Owing to a variety of causes, they had little or no training before taking up their present positions, and cannot see their way to make the necessary sacrifice to serve for a period in the Training College. In order to assist them, I think it would be a wise thing to employ an *organizing* teacher, whose duty it would be to spend a limited time in each of their schools, giving these teachers the benefit of his special skill. He might improve the time-table, reorganize the school if necessary, and take entire charge for the time, and show the teacher how the school should be taught. An Inspector, being not more than one day at a time in a school, can do but a limited amount in this direction. The improved efficiency of many of our smaller schools would soon justify the increased expenditure entailed by the adoption of such a plan." The time required to give effective help to teachers of this class is, I think, altogether beyond what an Inspector charged with his present duties and responsibilities can give. Probably it would in most cases amount to not less than a fortnight. It takes a considerable time to learn exactly where the pupils stand, what basis (if any) of accurate assimilated knowledge they possess on which as a sound foundation one can begin to raise the superstructure. This is the difficulty that imposes sharp limits to the help an Inspector can give a teacher under present conditions. Moreover, an Inspector has to form and express in some way an opinion of a teacher's skill, or want of skill, in his professional work, and this demands that he must observe his work for a considerable time. Classification and grading of teachers could not be provided for on other terms. Mr. Plummer's suggestion seems to me well worth a trial, but the term of the *organizing* teacher's visit would have to be sufficiently long to really answer its purpose.

Mr. Plummer's remarks on the spirit in which the teachers as a body undertake their duties may be quoted as sufficiently representative of the Inspectors' opinions. "Speaking generally, I have found that our teachers perform their duties in a thoroughly painstaking and conscientious manner. In cases where a reasonable amount of success has not crowned their efforts, the result has been due mainly to lack of experience and skill, not to absence of necessary zeal. Though there are some few who seem unable to rise above the level of mediocrity, and are content with the boasted successes of past years, the great majority are always striving to improve, and are ever ready to receive and adopt hints and suggestions which may help them to do so."

I shall soon be retiring from my position as Chief Inspector under the Board. During my term of service the teachers of the Auckland District have greatly improved the efficiency of their work; their teaching is marked by increasing intelligence and enthusiasm; discipline has grown firmer and milder; and a brighter spirit of work has blossomed out among the pupils. The old traditional picture of the schoolboy trudging unwillingly to school is becoming with us less and less true to life. As a body our teachers have risen to their responsibilities in a way greatly to their credit. For their zeal and diligence, for their ready effort to improve themselves in all desirable directions, they deserve in a high degree the appreciation and confidence of our people. It is a pleasure to me to be able honestly and in all sincerity to make this final acknowledgment of their merits, and to thank them for the high level of educational achievement they have so long maintained.

My obligations to the Inspectors, present and past, associated with me during my term of office are also very great. Whatever progress has been achieved under my direction is very largely due to their faithful and skilful co-operation.

I have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.