

Grading of Teachers.

As marking a proper emphasis of the growing recognition of the importance of primary education, I appreciate the Public Service Commissioner's action, after consultation with me, in appointing to the responsible office of Assistant Director of Education a primary-school headmaster whose widely known experience and judgment in educational matters is a guarantee of a due recognition of the possibilities of our schools in general, but of the primary schools in particular.

One of the first duties allotted to the Assistant Director was the initiation and administration of a Dominion grading scheme for teachers. This most important national reform has been carried to a highly successful issue. The work has been carried out with tact, skill, and decision. The regulations have met with widespread approval, and the first Dominion graded list of teachers is now in print. After any necessary revision as a result of criticism and experience, requisite improvements may be made, and then the graded list may be made the basis of a much improved system of appointment and promotion for the Dominion as a whole.

Such a system has been long desired, as it provides for appointment on merit, and merit only. It will also break down parochialism and give all parts of New Zealand an equal opportunity for securing the best teachers available for particular positions.

The benefit to the efficiency of the schools and to the education of the children will be very great, since it will make possible a much more rational distribution of teachers, putting the right man or woman in the right place, and stimulating and rewarding the progressive teacher.

Limitations.

Although the amount of the educational vote is large, there is not much scope for economizing in respect to the greater part of it. For instance, out of a total vote of £1,330,000 for last year no less than £1,270,000 was controlled by statute in the way of scales of salaries and schedule grants and payments. Though the vote for statutory payments increased by £63,000 as the result of natural expansion of activities, the increase in the total vote was only £12,200 in addition to the statutory increase.

Extra Responsibilities.

It should also be remembered that out of the educational vote there was paid no less a sum than £65,000 for purposes which, though of national importance (and which I am proud to direct) are not really educational work. I refer to expenditure in connection with boarding out afflicted and dependent children, special officers for benevolent agencies, such as nurses and visitors, as well as for medical expenses and maintenance over and above the expenses incurred in the actual instruction or education of the inmates of special institutions.

Economies.

Pending the more comprehensive system of organization and financial management, several matters have already been taken in hand. The purchase of supplies for all the special institutions such as industrial schools, training-farms, schools for the deaf, &c., have been put on an improved business footing, and already considerable saving has resulted.

Arrangements have also been made that some of these institutions shall produce their own supplies and, where possible, provide for other institutions out of their surplus produce. Further savings are being made as the result of—

- (a.) The plan for the gradual combination of inspection of Native and public schools :
- (b.) The more economical system of inspection of special schools :
- (c.) The method of direct negotiations for sites :
- (d.) Alterations in the system of medical and physical inspection :
- (e.) Adjustment of positions where salaries were over the scale rate.
- (f.) Considerable saving has also been effected through the more systematic method of collecting recoveries from parents of children under the charge of the Department.