

TARANAKI.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NEW PLYMOUTH TECHNICAL COLLEGE.

During the year classes were held at New Plymouth (475 students), Stratford (73 students), Eltham (62 students), Hawera (228 students), and Inglewood (14 students).

New Plymouth Technical School.—During the year 207 students attended the day classes. The courses taken up were—Commercial, agricultural, engineering, domestic, arts and science, and art and art crafts. Lack of accommodation made the carrying-on of the work somewhat difficult. We are badly in need of rooms for dressmaking and typewriting respectively, and also of two class-rooms. During the year the theoretical work in connection with the engineering and the arts and science courses was carried on in rented buildings. The completion of the engineering building, which is in course of erection, will enable the students taking that course to have suitable accommodation, but there is still much need for the rooms specified above.

The extraordinary labour conditions existing during the year meant that a number of students were not able to finish the course. In some cases the parents were unable to allow the boys to continue, while in others the offers made to boys who had received a practical training were too tempting to resist. The boys were booked up three months ahead for work during the holidays.

The following passes were recorded in the various examinations during the year: City and Guilds of London Institute—Plain cookery, one pass; motor-car engineering, eight passes; electrical engineering, three passes; Public Service Entrance, one pass; Matriculation, one pass, one partial pass; senior free place, one pass; junior free place, one pass; teachers D and C, one partial pass; teachers' D, two partial passes.

The evening classes were conducted on similar lines to those of the day classes. The compulsory attendance of young people at the classes was given a thorough trial, and in connection therewith I beg leave to make the following observations: (a.) There appears to be no penalty for the non-registration of students, either on the part of the parent or of the employer. This throws on the Board's officials the onus of ascertaining what boys and girls should be attending the classes. I suggest that a penalty is necessary. (b.) Many of the students reach their seventeenth birthday during the year. As they are then exempt from classes it means that the instructors do not know from week to week what the class numbers are likely to be; also, it engenders a spirit of unrest among the class generally, and militates against good work. I think the compulsion should extend to the end of the year in which the student reaches his seventeenth birthday. (c.) Capitation is not payable on more than 150 hours a year. This means that the best students—those who have become interested in the work—have to stop instead of being allowed to continue for the full 400 hours allowed in the case of other pupils.

A noticeable feature among the evening classes is the rapidity with which the students forget their Standard VI work. Students after securing their proficiency certificate in the previous year can seldom gain 50 per cent. of marks in Standard VI arithmetic. This seems to show that there should be a considerable amount of recapitulation during the first year after passing Standard VI in order to "dinch" the work of the primary schools.

Although among employers there is a greater appreciation of the value of technical work, yet there are many who do not insist sufficiently on their apprentices and junior employees taking advantage of the evening classes. I am prepared to meet employers in every possible way, and I feel sure that they could make much greater use of the school than they do. The number of students travelling by train continues to increase, and the railway officials do their utmost for the comfort of the travelling students.

At the Hawera Technical School the following courses of work were carried on: Commercial, art, domestic, and handicrafts. As is usually the case, the commercial classes were the best attended, and much good work was done. It is pleasing to record that domestic classes were also well attended, the girls showing a keen interest in the work. The art course had not so many students, while the handicraft course, chiefly designed to meet the requirements of those plumbers requiring certificates, suffered from the dearth of young men. In addition to the courses mentioned, instruction was given in woodwork, first aid and ambulance, and agriculture.

At the Stratford centre technical classes were held in plumbing, dressmaking, invalid cookery; and continuation classes in shorthand, education, and higher mathematics. Besides these, classes were held for pupils preparing for the proficiency certificate examination, for Public Service Entrance, and Matriculation examinations. The work done by the plumbing students was of a high order of merit, and the progress made of a very satisfactory nature. Dressmaking was a very popular subject, and instruction was given in it for three terms. A number of the students came in from East Road district, some from as far back as Te Wera. The class in invalid cookery was conducted for one term, at the end of which an examination was held. The members of the class were hospital nurses, and all were successful in gaining either a first- or a second-class certificate. Among the continuation classes shorthand was by far the most popular; instruction was given in this subject for three terms. The class in education was confined to teachers who were working for higher certificates; of those who took the subject two students were successful at the examination held at the end of the year.

At the Eltham centre technical classes were conducted in commercial English and arithmetic, book-keeping, shorthand, typewriting, and dressmaking. The classes were well attended, although here again the labour-conditions were not conducive to large numbers towards the end of the year, when a number of the boys left town employment to take up positions on farms. The thanks of the town are due to the Borough Council, which installed a gas cooker free of cost.

At the Inglewood centre the only technical class conducted was that in dressmaking. The class was well attended, many of the students coming from considerable distances in order to obtain the instruction.

ALFRED GRAY, Director.