

Staff Conferences.—Under this heading we regret to note that in some cases these conferences have been carried out with a perfunctoriness that nullifies their usefulness. As the intention of these conferences is to secure unity of aim and continuity of method, also to prevent overlapping by means of interchange of ideas between head teacher and staff, we shall in future consider it defective organization where we find that such a valuable means of improvement has not been carried out in the proper spirit. Without this interchange there is a strong probability of a large school becoming a number of classes taught in airtight compartments instead of an organization with interdependent parts, this isolation of teachers being utterly destructive to the idea of a school as an organic body. In the cases where conferences are properly carried out we are so satisfied with the effect that our faith in their efficacy is greater than ever it was.

We regret that the authorities have not yet made it part of a teacher's duty to visit other schools, as "we are more impressed by what we see than by what we hear." Nevertheless, our headmasters have it within their power to provide facilities for an interchange of visits by teachers of contiguous schools, and where this has been done the results have been most encouraging.

Returned Teachers.—Many of our teachers, after having so well discharged their patriotic duties, have resumed work and are settling down to work well. With their return our thoughts proudly revert to the part taken by our teachers and pupils in connection with the great national effort. The occasion well utilized for practical instruction in civics cannot fail to have lasting effect on the conduct of those engaged, while those young teachers who, in alert response to duty, made the supreme sacrifice have, by their noble example, bequeathed to our schools an imperishable heritage and a cherished memory.

Organizing Teachers.—The experiment has been so successful that we had little hesitation in advising the Otago Board to make two additional appointments, so now there are three teachers working respectively from Owaka, in the Catlins district; from Balclutha, in the Lower Clutha district; and from Ranfurly, in Otago Central. We have no doubt that such success will attend the efforts of the new appointees as resulted from the well-directed work of the first organizing teacher.

Physical Instruction.—We regret that the scheme of physical instruction has rendered useless the equipment of our gymnasiums, as we consider that a judicious use of apparatus will produce such habits of body and mind as cannot be effected by "free exercises" alone. So insistent on this was Ling, whose Swedish system we are supposed to follow, that free exercises were but a small portion of the work prescribed by him, as they tend to become mechanical and then cease to be educative. Within these somewhat circumscribed limits much good work is done in our schools, the exercises being suitably arranged and well demonstrated by our visiting instructors, who are always most helpful to our teachers. Now that the Department has appointed a Chief School Medical Officer we confidently look forward to important extensions of this essential branch of education.

We have, &c.,

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| T. R. FLEMING, | } Inspectors. |
| C. R. BOSSENCE, | |
| J. ROBERTSON, | |
| M. LYNKEY, | |

The Director of Education.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Invercargill, 25th March, 1920.

We have the honour to submit our report on the schools of Southland for the year ended 31st December, 1919.

The following table gives the number on the roll and the classification of the pupils attending the public schools of the district:—

| | Number on Roll. | Present at Annual Examination. |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Standard VII | 7 | 5 |
| " VI | 798 | 780 |
| " V | 1,179 | 1,149 |
| " IV | 1,435 | 1,397 |
| " III | 1,659 | 1,615 |
| " II | 1,534 | 1,495 |
| " I | 1,495 | 1,451 |
| Preparatory | 4,038 | 3,808 |
| Totals | 12,145 | 11,700 |

The number on the roll of registered private schools was 952, and the number present at the annual examination, 906.

In judging the efficiency of the instruction it has to be borne in mind that the schools opened in 1919 with a serious handicap in that, owing to the outbreak of influenza, the work of 1918 had been left unfinished. Some teachers, being impatient to begin the new work, neglected the necessary revision of the unfinished part; while others kept their classes revising too long; the successful teacher chose the middle course. On the whole, the problem of the short year was very successfully attacked, especially in the S6 class, in which the percentage of passes is only slightly below that of the previous year. The teachers may therefore be accounted to have risen worthily to the occasion. It has also to be noted that, owing to the impossibility of holding the usual annual examination in 1918, teachers were compelled to rely mainly on the results of the second-term examination as the basis of classification, and that, as a consequence, promotion was gained by pupils who, in ordinary circumstances, might have failed to qualify for a higher class. Further, the rising value of property throughout the district and the changes of home rendered necessary by war conditions have been responsible for an abnormal movement of population both in town and country, thus causing an exceptionally large number of withdrawals and admissions of pupils, whose progress has in some measure been impeded through changing schools. The combined effect of these factors has been to retard the progress of the schools: we are pleased, therefore, to be able to add that the teachers have met the difficulties of the year vigorously and resourcefully.