

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR OF TECHNICAL SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st August, 1920.

I have the honour to submit the following report on technical instruction in the Dominion during the year ending 31st December, 1919.

For obvious reasons the inspection of technical schools during the year under review could not be carried out with the same thoroughness as in previous years, but with the assistance of the Inspectors of Secondary Schools the work of technical high schools received the necessary attention, and a sufficiently close general survey was made of the technical-school work as a whole to enable a fair estimate of its value to be assessed. The conclusions arrived at are that, in view of the abnormal conditions under which the schools have been working for some years, the readjustment of staffs, and the difficulties incident to the supplies of material and equipment, the quality of the work has in no way suffered, nor have the earnestness and diligence of the students deteriorated.

With reference to evening classes, the conviction is established that technical instruction under present conditions has long since reached the limit of its usefulness, and that if our young prospective craftsmen are to be given opportunities of acquiring a substantial foundational knowledge of the principles of their trade the instruction will have to be given at a time and under conditions that will enable them to derive the full benefit, and not, as at present, when they are tired, having expended their best energies on their daily work. The main objections to daytime instruction for apprentices appear to be based on the assumption that what served the purpose of past generations ought to serve the purposes of the present. Night schools must, however, be associated with sailing-ships and stage coaches; and, as a progressive nation demands a more rapid method of transport, so if we as a nation are to take our place among progressive peoples a system of technical training adapted to present-day ideals and needs will have to be adopted. In this connection it appears desirable again to stress the necessity of one of our Government Departments taking the initial step toward this phase of educational reconstruction. Other countries have already taken the step. The Queensland Railway Department makes it compulsory for all apprentices to attend the Ipswich Technical School, and is so assured of the value of the training given in the preliminary trade course that all apprentices are selected from students who have passed through it; and, further, the Department has selected thirty apprentices who have not had the advantages of the preliminary course to take a course of special training. Wages are paid during the hours of attendance, and additional wages on passing certain examinations. It may be objected that the conditions in Queensland are dissimilar from those obtaining in this country; that both the railways and the technical schools are under the direct control of the Government, and that the latter is therefore able to control more directly the instruction given in the schools than is possible in New Zealand. Granting that the conditions are not the same, it should still be possible for any Department to familiarize itself with the type of training given in our leading technical schools, and should it be satisfactorily shown that youths after taking a three-years course at these schools are better fitted to enter upon workshop training than those entering as apprentices direct from the primary schools, preference in the selection of apprentices should be given to the former. A further objection may be advanced that the type of training given in the schools is unsuitable for apprentices entering a given Department. To this it may be replied that the courses of instruction, generally speaking, aim at quickening the interests of the pupils in mechanical work, training their intelligence, and giving a sound knowledge of the elementary principles of craftsmanship, including mathematics, geometry, elementary mechanics, science, and drawing, with sufficient workshop practice to illustrate the principles, and at the same time to co-ordinate theory and practice. It is contended that such a course provides an admirable foundation on which to erect the superstructure of trade training; but if in the opinion of a Department the course is unsuitable, desirable changes could readily be made. The goal in view is the best possible training for the all-round efficiency of our future citizens, and its attainment is possible only when the employers and those in control of technical schools are in accord as to the most effective means of reaching it.

TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS.

The following table shows in a graphic manner the progress of technical high schools in recent years:—

Progress of Technical High Schools.

Year.	Total Roll.	Percentage Increases over Previous Year.	Percentage Increase over Year 1912.	Total Boys.	Total Girls.	Number taking the various Courses.					
						Industrial and Art.		Agriculture.	Commercial and General.		Domestic.
						Boys.	Girls.		Boys.	Girls.	
1912 ..	1,526	684	842	379	11	58	247	575	256
1913 ..	1,664	9.1	9.1	739	925	409	7	77	253	611	307
1914 ..	1,839	10.5	20.6	860	979	471	3	91	298	663	313
1915 ..	1,955	6.3	28.1	937	1,018	489	3	115	333	688	327
1916 ..	2,105	7.6	38.0	973	1,132	482	..	153	338	831	301
1917 ..	2,347	11.5	53.8	1,110	1,237	592	2	158	360	944	291
1918 ..	2,747	17.0	80.1	1,265	1,482	698	5	177	390	1,092	385
1919 ..	2,926	6.5	91.7	1,438	1,488	787	4	203	448	1,187	297