

the average age of the pupils at that stage is fifteen years ten months little else can be expected. The question that is receiving serious consideration is whether the present arrangement of the primary and secondary systems of education provide the best educational equipment for the large number of children leaving school finally at the age of fifteen or sixteen years. The conclusions arrived at are set out in the following paragraph.

POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION.

A conference of educationists held in April of the current year, after fully considering the matter, passed certain resolutions which it is proposed to carry into effect as opportunity offers. The principal proposal is that the primary course should end when the average child has completed his twelfth year. (The present average age of children at the end of the year in S6 is fourteen years.) The child should then enter upon his post-primary course at a junior high school, three-fifths of which course will be common to all the pupils and include such subjects as English, arithmetic, geography, history and civics, general science, and drawing and practical geometry, the remaining two-fifths having an academic, commercial, industrial (including domestic), agricultural, or art bias, according to the special aptitude of the individual. Pending the elaboration and adoption of a complete scheme, the proposal is to experiment in three types of such post-primary schools:—

- (a.) A junior high school in one of the four chief centres.
- (b.) Another in a town in which all the post-primary pupils could be taken for a three-years course in a junior high school.
- (c.) Another in a country district in which the post-primary pupils of a number of small schools could be provided for in a district high school with a junior-high-school course.

At the conclusion of the junior-high-school course pupils desiring to proceed further will, of course, enter a senior high school or technical high school. The chief point of the proposed change is that the school course will be divided into 6-3-3 year periods, instead of 8-2 or 8-4 year periods as at present, and pupils leaving after nine years' schooling will have received a much more useful, well-balanced, and complete course than is possible under the present arrangement.

CURRICULUM OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

Although there are at present no departmental regulations directly governing the curriculum of secondary schools, the regulations defining the subjects of instruction to be taught to free-place holders and the prescribed syllabuses of the various public examinations to a large extent control the character of the courses of work undertaken. Instruction must be provided for junior-free-place holders in English, history and civics, arithmetic, mathematics, a branch of science, and in two additional subjects which may be one or two foreign languages, science subjects, or some such subject as commercial work, woodwork, drawing, &c. The study of home science is compulsory for every girl holding a junior free place.

The Department's Inspectors of Secondary Schools visit all secondary schools, inspecting the work, conferring with the teachers on teaching matters, and discussing with the Principals details of organization and method. Written and oral tests are also given to second-year pupils in English, arithmetic, and usually in other subjects up to the standard of the Intermediate Examination, and Principals' recommendations for the award of senior free places and of the various leaving-certificates are dealt with. General improvement in the quality of the teaching is reported, teachers, on the whole, displaying a growing interest in educational reform and in modern methods of instruction.

In the main the courses provided at secondary schools are of an academic character, but the necessity of providing for pupils not intending to take up a scholastic or professional career is being increasingly realized. Short courses are now provided in most schools, suitable for pupils remaining only one or two years, from which the study of foreign languages and mathematics is generally excluded; commercial courses are also followed by a large number of pupils, and instruction in such subjects as agriculture, needlework, and cookery is fairly general. Of the