

The need for systematic technical training of apprentices has been felt for a long time, as has been shown in the case of the plumbing trade, in which, in places where the apprentices are induced to take a reasonably good course, the results of the certificate examinations are satisfactory, but where they are allowed to leave their technical-school training to the last few months of apprenticeship the results are correspondingly poor.

It is to be hoped that full advantage will be taken of the powers given in the Apprentice Act, and, further, that the importance of day continuation and technical classes will become more generally recognized, so that the provisions of the Apprentice Act relating to the technical training of apprentices may be extended to include all young people at work. It is, however, quite certain that the reintroduction of compulsory attendance only at evening classes of young people between fourteen and seventeen would not be in accordance with either the letter or the spirit of recent legislation, while in the opinion of the great majority of Directors of Technical Schools and of those in the industries it would be of very doubtful advantage educationally. The Inspectors of Technical Schools have repeatedly noted a lack of freshness in the appearance of young people at evening classes. In many cases it was obviously difficult for students to fix their attention on the work in hand or even to keep awake. In these circumstances it is easily seen that the work of unwilling students forced to take subjects in which they were not interested could not be of any appreciable value.

During the year grants totalling nearly £35,000 were made in respect of buildings and equipment. Additions were made to the following schools: Wellington Technical College (completion of north front of main building); Palmerston North (extension of engineering workshops); Masterton (alterations to woodwork-shop); Dunedin (erection of G. M. Thomson wing for the home-science department); Feilding (hostel for boys).

*British Empire Exhibition.*—A large and representative exhibit of work done in technical schools and manual-training classes in the Dominion was sent to England for the British Empire Exhibition. The work was not specially prepared, but was selected from the ordinary work done in class during the year. The general quality of the exhibits was good, and the range of work fairly wide.

*Classification of Teachers.*—The system of classification adopted for teachers in technical and manual-training schools has worked smoothly during the year, and appears to satisfy the great majority of the teachers. The number of appeals in respect of the annual reclassification was small, and the cases presented no serious difficulties, and indicated no essential weaknesses in the method of classification. Indication points, however, towards the necessity of making some provision for regulating the strength of staff which may be approved in respect of each school, in order to prevent popular schools from obtaining an undue advantage in staffing.

I have to record with deep regret the untimely death of Mr. F. D. Opie, late Director of the Palmerston North Technical School. Mr. Opie managed the school for many years with great tact and enthusiasm, and, practically without any permanent assistance, built up one of the most successful evening schools in the Dominion.

I have, &c.,

W. S. LA TROBE,

Superintendent of Technical Education.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 28th July, 1924.

I have the honour to present a report on technical education as carried on at the technical high schools for the year 1923.

The opening of the new technical high school at Greymouth in February made the fourteenth school of this type inaugurated in the Dominion, an increase of one upon the number for the previous year. As for the previous year, there was a large increase in the numbers of full-time day students attending technical high schools, being in each case equivalent to an increase of 20 per cent. of the whole.

The most disturbing feature in connection with the work done at the technical high schools is the great wastage of pupils during the first and second years' attendance. Returns where available show that some 20 per cent. of the entrants leave before the end of the first year, while only some 30 per cent. complete the second year, and the proportion staying for three and four years is in most schools negligible. Various reasons have been given in explanation of this very serious state of affairs, and certain remedies have been proposed. The causes are undoubtedly to be found in social and economic conditions rather than in any inherent defect in the schools themselves, and the remedy lies most probably in the direction of suitably controlling those conditions.

It is satisfactory to note that there is an increasing tendency for pupils to take courses other than the general or literary courses, and it may be expected that this tendency will become more pronounced as workshop, field, and laboratory accommodation are added to the technical high schools, especially to those which are in the position of being the only post-primary school in the