

As an amount of approximately £2,000 per annum was available for improving the conditions of service and the salaries of teachers, the opportunity was taken of introducing some reforms which have been generally approved by the Boards and staffs.

With very few and very insignificant exceptions, the rules and regulations for the general management and conduct of the classes have been faithfully observed by all concerned during the year.

I have, &c.,

The Director of Education, Wellington.

W. S. LA TROBE,
Superintendent of Technical Education.

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 2nd June, 1926.

I have the honour to present my report on the work of home science in the technical schools, technical high schools, and manual-training centres as observed by me during my visits of inspection for the year 1925.

Owing to lost time, due mainly to the epidemic, it was not possible to visit every school or class, and time did not permit of a detailed written report on the work of each teacher visited. Opportunity, however, was always taken to discuss fully with the teachers concerned any problems or difficulties which seemed to call for special consideration. At these informal meetings opinions may be expressed and criticisms made much more forcibly than would be possible in a written report, and I feel more good can be done by them to improve the efficiency of the teaching. It appears difficult for the Boards to distinguish between a personal report and a testimonial, and it will therefore always be necessary to have such informal talks. In addition to a personal meeting, where possible groups of teachers have met with the Inspector for discussion of general aspects of the work, as ever since my appointment I have been particularly anxious to secure greater co-operation between the different branches of the school system as well as between classes in the same branch. A single specialist teacher on a school staff or a manual-training teacher is very isolated, and her work is apt to suffer unless opportunity is made for her to have intercourse with other home-science teachers. The work in home science is somewhat hampered, and in some cases is temporarily stopped, by the shortage of teachers, and until the supply increases and the training of teachers improves the subject is unlikely to improve very rapidly.

Technical-high-school Work.—Twelve technical high schools offer a special domestic course of two or more years' duration for girls. The content of the courses varies considerably from place to place; but there seems a tendency to make the course more general in the smaller centres where the technical high school is the only secondary school, whilst in the larger centres the work is often more-specialized, and it seems likely that from these town courses may develop a purely vocational training as well as the general domestic course to fit girls for their everyday life. In all these schools girls attending the commercial or general course take some work in home science in accordance with the regulations for junior-free-place holders.

There is a tendency to treat home science as a combination of laboratory work, cookery, and dress-making, and not to take a sufficiently broad outlook on household management as a whole. This attitude of mind is probably largely due to the fact that the work is taken in three class-rooms—viz., a practical-science laboratory, a kitchen, and a dressmaking-room—and is necessarily not taken in practical relation to the work of a home. No provision is made at present for including teaching in the care of children, although one or two centres have tried it successfully when it has been possible to make arrangements. The provision of more suitable working-facilities based on the home is to be desired.

Many of the smaller schools are handicapped in the development of a well-balanced domestic course by the smallness of their classes, which makes it imperative to arrange the work of these domestic girls to fit in with other pupils of the same year. At present I am not satisfied with the standard of the work offered. In the smaller schools there is no traditional course, and the staff are young and constantly changing, so that much time is wasted. In the larger schools the traditional course is one of pure technique, and the educational side of the work has been rather lost sight of in attempting to turn out good seamstresses and cooks. It will be some years before the courses are placed on a definite basis. The proposed inclusion of housecraft and needlework and dressmaking as subjects for Senior National Scholarship, Public Service Entrance, and Intermediate will give a great impetus to the work, and the introduction of a recognized departmental syllabus will also have a guiding influence.

Technical Schools.—The technical schools offer special courses in needlework and dressmaking, cookery, and applied art, and also may undertake manual-training classes for primary-school children as well. The courses are usually less general and more vocational than those offered in technical high schools, and in some cases a definite vocational aspect is given to the work, as girls find that their opportunities of employment in dressmaking establishments, &c., are increased if they have a personal recommendation from the technical school. Some of the dressmaking done reaches a high standard. Both types of technical schools offer classes in the evening, and the dressmaking classes are often well attended and deservedly popular. There is a general lack of public interest in cookery, hence there is not much demand for adult cookery classes, and they are only held in a few schools. There are, however, sixteen or seventeen cookery classes specially arranged for nurses, which are useful under present circumstances, but will probably be dropped as the hospitals improve and alter their household arrangements in accordance with more modern ways.