

I. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 6th June, 1927.

I have the honour to present the report for the year 1926. The past year has witnessed considerable changes in the personnel of the staff of the inspectorate. Mr. H. P. Kidson resigned his position in January in order to take up his duties as Principal of the newly established Hutt Valley High School. Two months later Miss J. I. Hetherington, M.A., and Mr. W. T. Foster, M.A., B.Litt., joined the staff, and were followed in April by Mr. E. Caradus, B.Sc. An increase in the numerical strength of the inspectorate had undoubtedly been desirable for some time if effective supervision of secondary education were to be maintained and adequate assistance rendered to the teachers. Since 1918, when an additional Inspector was first appointed to assist Mr. T. R. Cresswell, the number of secondary schools had risen by the end of 1926 from thirty-two to thirty-nine, and the number of secondary pupils from 7,018 to 12,558—an increase of very nearly 79 per cent. In the same period the number of registered private secondary schools had practically doubled itself, rising from seventeen to thirty-two. In the past few years it has been found impossible to devote adequate attention to the private schools, but with the enlargement of the inspectorial staff there is now a reasonable prospect of overtaking some of the arrears in this branch of the work.

In the earlier portion of the year full inspection visits were paid to eighteen of the departmental secondary school—twelve in the North and six in the South Island—and also to Kowhai Junior High School. At various times during the year opportunity was also taken to inspect nine of the private registered secondary schools. The desirability of effecting a closer co-operation in the inspection of primary and secondary schools, and between the two branches of the inspectorate, has been recognized for some considerable time, but the meagre strength of the secondary staff had definitely precluded the possibility of any effective scheme being put into operation. The recent doubling of the staff has, however, enabled some progress to be made, and during the past year the secondary departments of some thirty-five district high schools, chiefly in the Education Districts of Otago, Canterbury, Wellington, Wanganui, and Hawke's Bay, were inspected, and reports on them forwarded to the Senior Inspectors of the districts concerned. The primary Inspectors are still responsible for the control of these departments and for the grading of the teachers employed in them, but it is felt that the secondary Inspectors, with their naturally wider knowledge of the teaching of secondary-school subjects, will be in a position to render valuable assistance to district-high-school teachers by bringing them into touch with the best methods employed in our secondary schools. A closer correlation not only in methods and text-books, but also in curricula and in aims and ideals, is extremely desirable, and efforts are being steadily directed towards obtaining it.

The sittings of the Classification Appeal Board were attended in April. The Board met as in the preceding year, in Wellington, Auckland, and Dunedin. The number of appeals (six) was even smaller than in previous years; one appeal was allowed by the Board, two were disallowed, and two were withdrawn.

The latter portion of the year was chiefly occupied with visits to each of the thirty-nine secondary schools for the purposes of inquiring into the recommendations of candidates for senior free places and for leaving-certificates. In more than half of the schools the classification of assistant teachers is also dependent upon observations made during these visits. So far as the selection of recommended candidates was concerned, the usual procedure, as described in previous reports, was reverted to, its intermission in 1925 being regarded as a temporary expedient only. The written tests have been more extensively employed during the past year than on any previous occasion. As a result of the Inspectors' recommendations senior free places were awarded in accordance with clause 7 (c) to 2,563 candidates from the departmental secondary schools; another 157 were subsequently successful in obtaining them by passing the Intermediate Examination in November. The number of "higher" leaving-certificates awarded has latterly shown a tendency to increase at a remarkable rate; last year no fewer than 789 were obtained by recommendation from secondary schools, 76 of these coming from registered private schools. Some 110 "lower" leaving-certificates were also issued.

Little comment need be made on staffing problems and changes in the personnel of the staffs in the various schools during the past year. Boards of Governors in the smaller towns are now apparently experiencing much less difficulty in obtaining teachers for the lower grades than they formerly did. There is still, however, a distinct reluctance among women teachers to apply for A or B grade positions in schools outside the four centres; even when an additional emolument for the position of first woman assistant in a mixed school is offered, Boards still find that no applications may be forthcoming and that the vacancies must be readvertised.

The supply of young teachers with satisfactory qualifications is now much more equal to the demand than it was even a few years ago. It is satisfactory to note that the proportion of teachers entering the secondary service after completing a course at a training college is increasing year by year. In 1923, for example, only 49 per cent. of the entrants had been trained; last year the percentage had risen to 67 (74 for men and 58 for women), whilst another 14 per cent. had had previous teaching