

STAFFING.

In addition to an increasing full-time staff, to which more particular reference is made in the second part of this report, the larger schools continue to employ a considerable number of part-time teachers, especially in the evening classes. For continuation work these part-time teachers are mostly drawn from the ranks of the local primary- or secondary-school staffs, and are in all cases trained and experienced teachers. In the various trade courses, on the other hand, the part-time teachers are invariably men in the trade or directly connected with it as inspectors, overseers, or managers, and necessarily lack the professional training of a teacher. They are, however, usually accustomed to handling men and boys, are conversant with all the practical details of the trade, and with its psychology, and are therefore in a much better position for understanding the needs of the pupils and their point of view than if they were trained teachers without a living knowledge of the trade or of trade conditions. In formulating any scheme for training teachers for technological subjects this basic fact must be borne in mind. Generally speaking, the work of the part-time teachers in trade classes maintains from year to year a very satisfactory level.

In recent years the schools have come more closely into touch with trade conditions through advisory committees of employers and employees, and also through the Apprenticeship Committees.

BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, AND EQUIPMENT.

Considerable difficulty in making provision for the instruction of classes in special trade subjects arises from the fact that special rooms and equipment are required in nearly all cases, whereas it is only in a few trades that full use can be made of accommodation and equipment.

In general metal-work and in woodwork there is a sufficient demand for instruction, in the larger centres at least, to keep the shops fully engaged day and evening, and in such crafts as painting and decorating and plastering the major part of the work can be done in art rooms also used for general classes in art; but in a trade like plumbing, or in the more specialized training of the apprentice in machine-work, or in trade processes such as piecemoulding for plasterers, or paperhanging and painting for painters and decorators, special rooms are needed, perhaps for two evenings weekly, and cannot be used at other times for other purposes. In such cases the capital cost for housing the classes is often prohibitive, especially when it is remembered that only the more urgently necessary buildings for full daytime use can be provided out of the available funds. In other cases the equipment and material to be provided and the output to be disposed of make it practically impossible to establish classes in a country like New Zealand where there are no large concentrations of a manufacturing population.

In one or two cases—for example, in the training of linotype operators—the trade itself has supplied the necessary machinery, while the Department has provided the accommodation and the cost of teaching and supervision. In no case, however, have classes been established where materials are used on a manufacturing scale, and the problem of disposing of the output has arisen. In the main centres it is true that woodworking machinery has been installed, but it is used mainly for demonstration and for dealing with stock for class or school purposes.

In the case of classes for motor-mechanics in several centres the Apprenticeship Committees have secured the support of the employers, who have made substantial contributions towards the cost of equipment and running expenses.

CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION.

The character and quality of the instruction in the evening classes varies little from year to year. Probably the percentage of boys and girls with a good grounding of secondary instruction is increasing though the evidence on this point is not very conclusive. The teaching itself, in the hands of competent practical men and women, maintains a good level, but cannot improve at any great rate, since it must reflect the general standard of the best craftsmanship, and this changes very slowly in most trades. The same remarks apply to the special commercial classes, and also to the art classes, in which, however, it is probable that the present staffing is considerably stronger on the average than it was some years ago. The establishment of a University diploma course in art at the Christchurch School of Art should have a good effect on art teaching in years so come, and also, it is to be hoped, on the popular estimation of the value of a training in art subjects.

The cultural value of the training in art given in the schools of art and in some of the technical schools has been recognized for many years, but in recent years an additional incentive to the study of art has been provided by the growing demand in industry and commerce for men and women with skill and knowledge of applied art of various kinds. To this must be attributed the progressive increase in numbers of young students, especially boys, taking a course in art in the day classes in preparation for employment.

REGULATIONS, RETURNS, ETC.

The authorities concerned have, with few minor exceptions, faithfully observed the provisions of the Act and regulations during the year 1927.