

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.

233. We have considered in detail the administrative cost of the educational system in New Zealand as compared with the cost in the Australian States, and are of the opinion that the system at present in operation in the Dominion is unduly expensive.

234. Under the Board system in operation, the administrative cost per pupil is 9s. 2d., while the cost per pupil in Native schools maintained and administered by the Education Department is only 3s. 6d. per pupil. In the Australian States the cost per pupil is as follows: New South Wales, 5s. 4d.; Victoria, 4s.; Queensland, 4s. 1d.

235. The Australian costs are comparable with the cost of administration of Native schools in New Zealand, and, as the Board system is not in operation in either case, it seems evident that considerable savings could be effected by the abolition of the Boards. In this connection we quote hereunder the remarks of Mr. Frank Tate, C.M.G., in the "Year-book of Education," 1932:—

"Those whose experience is confined to public education managed by local authorities, financed in whole or in part by a State Department which is content to exercise only a general supervision and control, are apt to conclude that administration by a central Department must inevitably be rigid and formal, resulting in mechanical uniformity and loss of freedom, and that local interest in the well-being of the schools will be lost. Nothing could be further from the fact. During the past thirty years I have been privileged to visit and inquire into school systems in every important part of the Empire, and I have found in Australia as much evidence of educational progress, of efficient and sympathetic control, of flexibility of curriculum and methods to suit special conditions, and of keen local interest in school affairs, as may be met with elsewhere. The truth is that we may find deadness and formalism under any system of administration. 'Whate'er is best administered is best.' It is true that if at the head of a centralized system there are men who lack stimulus, driving-power, and vision, the school system may be afflicted with a creeping paralysis; but it is equally true that under vigorous and inspiring leadership loyal and devoted team-work will under centralized administration produce noteworthy results in a comparatively brief time. Progress has not to wait until lay authorities have been convinced of the wisdom and practicability of every project."

236. We are of the opinion that the abnormally high cost in the Dominion is due largely to the complicated system of control at present in existence. We refer to control by Primary Education Boards, Secondary School Boards, and Technical School Boards, as well as by the Department. The Boards have no responsibility for the raising of the money they spend, and practically the whole of the expenditure on education, amounting to over £3,000,000 per annum, passes first of all through the Education Department and then through the Boards, the expenditure being governed by the Education Act or by regulations administered by the Department. Under the present system it is necessary for the Department to oversee all expenditure, and the result is that the present system of administration is one of the most cumbrous and costly that could be devised.

237. The bulk of the expenditure of the Education Boards is in the payment of teachers' salaries, and it would be a simple matter for the Department to arrange payment direct to the teachers, instead of through Education Boards as at present.

238. We consider that the Board system should be abolished, but that School Committees should be retained. There should be no risk of any loss of efficiency in the education system as a result.

239. As a means of maintaining local interest in secondary and technical schools we suggest the formation of School Councils, somewhat akin to parents' associations which have come into being of recent years, and which have proved how successful and effective such voluntary organizations can be in stimulating local interest.

Estimated saving, £50,000.

FUTURE CONTROL OF EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION.

240. Before passing to consideration of other matters affecting education expenditure, we desire to state that, in our opinion, the expenditure of such a large annual sum of money on the all-important national service of education should be governed entirely by principle and policy, and should be removed from the possibility of being influenced by motives of political expediency.

241. In the past there has been lavish expenditure on education which could have been avoided without affecting the efficiency of the system.

242. With a view to providing a more effective measure of control, we recommend a change in the present system by the establishment of a Central Advisory Board, in which the control of education in the Dominion should be vested.

243. We have recommended the abolition of the existing Education Boards, and stated that it should be a simple matter to maintain local interest by means of honorary School Committees or Councils. We feel that local Councils should be able to co-operate with a Central Advisory Board, and that the result should be more economical control of the educational system and at least an equally efficient service.

DEPARTMENTAL STAFF.

244. There has been a considerable reduction already in the cost of the administrative and inspectorial staff of the Department, amounting in all to approximately £17,000. We consider, however, that by withholding the appointment of one Senior Inspector and one Staff Inspector, and also by postponing the appointment of a Native School Inspector, a further saving of £1,150 can be effected.