

SPECIAL CLASSES.

The Special Classes, established for the education of mentally retarded children who cannot make appreciable progress in an ordinary class, continue to do very good work.

Two new classes were established during the year.

Many parents still show a disinclination to allow their children to take advantage of these classes, owing to some degree of social inferiority which they think attaches to any pupils therein. Unfortunately, there is no other way of educating these children in large centres of population, since they require constant individual attention. Everything is done to avoid segregating these pupils: the classes are conducted as part of an ordinary public school, the pupils associate with the other pupils in all playground activities, including physical training and games, they may take some class-room lessons—*e.g.*, singing—in common, and the older girls and boys attend the ordinary manual-training centres. Whatever stigma (if any) may attach to a pupil while in such classes, it is as nothing compared with that attaching to the children if they leave school uneducated and untrained.

These pupils generally leave at the age of fourteen, though there is statutory provision for retaining them to a later age. Employment committees reported last year that whereas it was relatively easy to place these specially trained young persons in employment with a reasonable hope of their being able to retain their positions, the reverse was the case with those who had not attended a Special Class. The committees also recommended that these pupils should not be allowed to leave school till some suitable form of employment had been found for them.

The Special Class established in Auckland City for those children and young persons too retarded to profit by instruction even in an ordinary Special Class continues to do fine work. The pupils are happy in having opportunities for enjoying social life, and, under the influence of music, physical exercises, games, and elementary handwork, their speech and behaviour approaches more and more to the normal. Such a class frees the mother from the never-ending task of supervision, and this in itself reacts to the benefit of the child. Two permanent teachers are attached to this class. In addition, a number of retired infant-mistresses of outstanding ability give constant advice and direct aid in conducting the class, while a committee of women provides for the physical welfare of the children. There is a strong demand for the extension of these activities on behalf of such children, and on behalf also of those children in isolated areas who, though mentally retarded, are quite capable of profiting by ordinary Special Class instruction.

BROADCASTING TO SCHOOLS.

There is a steady increase in the number of schools listening-in to the YA stations in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin (which rebroadcasts the Wellington programme). Reports of householders' meetings indicate an increasing interest in the subject. Over 500 schools are now able to "listen-in." The principal aim is not to supplant the teacher, nor to supplement the syllabus, but to introduce into schools the mental stimulus which experts in their subjects are so well able to impart. Teachers in many schools may thereby learn new methods of presenting subjects, but of more importance is the fact that pupils in every school may have their imaginations stimulated in listening to people speaking of their daily vocations, their special studies, and their travels. An innovation during the year was a series of broadcast talks on French pronunciation to Correspondence School pupils. In addition, the pupils acquire the art of listening intently for a period, of discriminating between the quality of the programmes, and of criticizing the standard of speech and of reception. Wireless may thus serve as a connecting-link between the schools and the broad stream of the nation's life.

Last year the Broadcasting Board offered a small fee to school broadcasters; but if the intrinsic quality of the matter and the manner in which it is delivered are in all cases to reach a sufficiently high standard, we must be prepared to pay a higher fee; this would enable us to demand a higher quality in the broadcaster's script, and to insist upon the broadcaster submitting to a transmission test. With the completion of the new high-power 2YA Station, and with the co-operation of the post-primary schools, a much better service should be available. Competent speakers at a distance from the transmitting-station could have their talks recorded for broadcasting.

TEACHERS ON EXCHANGE.

During the year the system of exchanging teachers with other parts of the British Commonwealth was continued: ten went to England, three to Canada, two each to Victoria and New South Wales, and one each to South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania—a total of twenty.

I have, &c.,
 JAS. W. MCLLRAITH,
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