

2. REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present the report for the year 1935:—

STAFF.

At the commencement of the year Mr. J. E. Leaming, M.A., took up his duties as an Inspector, filling the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. Mawson in the preceding year. Mr. Leaming was formerly Senior Assistant at the Rotorua High School, and his work has been chiefly, though by no means entirely, in connection with languages, history, and accountancy.

ROUTINE WORK.

During the first half of the year seventeen secondary and combined schools were fully inspected, as well as the secondary departments of the twenty-four district high schools in the Wellington, Nelson, Hawke's Bay, and Wanganui Education Districts. In addition, sixteen registered private secondary schools were inspected and reported on at various times during the year. In the later part of the year all departmental secondary and combined schools were visited in connection with the annual classification of assistant teachers and the award of senior free places and higher-leaving certificates by recommendation.

For the first time on record no appeals were lodged by teachers against their classification, and accordingly no time was occupied in attending sittings of the Appeal Board.

The numbers of departmental secondary and combined schools remain at thirty-eight and six respectively. On the 1st March their aggregate roll was 18,046, as compared with 17,786 in the preceding year. This is the first occasion on which the roll has exceeded the 18,000 mark, a testimony to the returning prosperity observable in 1935. The roll number in December was comparatively low—only 15,622, as against 15,876 in 1931; this disparity is also an indication of better times, as during the past year there has been in many centres a keen demand for boys with a secondary-school training, whereas in 1931 most avenues of employment were closed to them.

Another cheering symptom of the passing of the depression has been the steady increase in the number of pupils residing in school hostels; this rose from 964 in the preceding year to 1,133 in 1935. Most hostels, however, are far from full even now, and the total number of boarders is still 37 per cent. below that for the peak year (1929). It is extremely improbable that the numbers obtaining in the years immediately preceding the depression will be reached again for many years to come; many children in remote districts are now catered for by the Correspondence School, at infinitely less cost to the parents.

During the year the St. Mary's Catholic Boys' School at Invercargill was added to the list of registered private secondary schools. As one other school was removed from the list the number of registered private schools remains at fifty-two. Their aggregate roll on 1st July was 4,077 (1,795 boys and 2,282 girls).

FREE PLACES AND LEAVING CERTIFICATES.

The number of senior free places granted to pupils from departmental secondary and combined schools on the Principals' and the Inspectors' recommendations was 3,748 (3,602 in 1934). Of the candidates who failed to obtain free places by this method, some 345 sat the Intermediate Examination in November, but only 58 of these—i.e., less than 17 per cent.—succeeded in securing senior free places by passing the examination.

The recently instituted School Certificate Examination has been held for a second time in conjunction with the University Entrance Examination. As was explained in my last report, the number of candidates sitting for the certificate only, as apart from the University Entrance, cannot be expected to increase appreciably until purely certificate courses become more firmly established in our schools. For the conjoint examination 4,307 candidates sat, as against 3,985 in 1934; the number of those who sat for the certificate alone rose slightly from 212 to 285. Unfortunately, these in the main comprised the poorer types of candidates; only 24 per cent. of them succeeded in obtaining certificates, whereas of those who sat the conjoint examination 52 per cent. were successful.

The total number of certificates granted was 2,310, as against 1,876 in the preceding year. Partial passes were obtained by 770 candidates. Of the subjects not prescribed for University Entrance book-keeping maintains its lead in popularity, with 138 candidates; shorthand and typing showed an increase with 34, but needlework (18) and housecraft (17) fell away badly; physiology (17), technical drawing (15), technical electricity (12), applied mechanics (12), and economics (10) met a very limited demand, whilst there were no candidates at all in either biology or heat engines.

It must be admitted that the efforts of the Department and of the post-primary schools to popularize the school certificate and to secure for it the recognition that it deserves from business men in general and from employers in particular have not met with much success. It is true that the problem is not peculiar to New Zealand; educational journals reveal a similar position elsewhere. The faith of the employer in the efficacy of an examination which is specifically designed to discover whether the candidate is fitted to pursue an academic course at a University is as deeply rooted in England as it is here. One obvious remedy that might well be applied in New Zealand is to raise the standard of University Entrance