

CONCLUSION.

Increasing care is being given to the physical welfare of pupils, and, in the future, still further attention will undoubtedly be paid to this important feature of the work of our secondary schools. The average quality of the teaching seen and the standard reached continue to be very good. The tone of the schools is excellent.

I have, &c.,

E. CARADUS,

Acting Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools.

The Director of Education, Wellington.

3. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present my report for the year 1936 :—

GENERAL.

Remarks in my report last year on the need for raising the school-leaving age to prevent children being rushed into employment when industrial conditions are favourable have been strongly confirmed by the experience of the past year. The need for developing some system of youth-training for industry which may take the place of apprenticeship at least in times of industrial depression has also become more obvious during the past year, which has seen a large increase in the numbers of apprentices, while some 5,000 youths of eighteen to twenty-three years of age, who should have been serving their apprenticeship during the lean years, are without trades and without suitable occupations.

The question of apprenticeship was discussed by the Technical Education Association at its conference in September, 1936, and a sub-committee was appointed to draw up a report, including, if possible, a scheme for the training of apprentices which should suggest means for avoiding the recurrence of the conditions existing during the past six years.

It is abundantly clear that the question is not solely an internal one in respect of any particular trade, and it would therefore appear that trade training must become at least in part a matter for the community as a whole to take into its care.

Provision was made in the Apprentices Act, 1923, for the transfer of an apprentice from one employer to another willing and able to take him, but there was no provision for the State or any other authority to continue the training of an apprentice whose employer was unable to continue his training or to get him transferred to another employer. There was also no provision for new apprentices to be taken on during periods of slackness in anticipation of future needs. The result was that the number of apprentices in the Dominion fell by over 60 per cent. during the years of depression. It is possible that too many were being trained during boom years, but it appears to be certain that many more should have been trained during the slump years. There can be no doubt whatever that such fluctuations in the employment of apprentices are totally at variance with any logical system of vocational guidance, training, and placement.

The activities of the various employment committees altered considerably during the year 1936 in the direction of finding young people to fill positions, rather than positions for young people. It was generally thought that the demand was greater for younger boys and girls than for those over fifteen or sixteen years of age, but returns from the several types of post-primary schools showed that the conditions were not substantially different from those in other years of improving trade.

Towards the end of the year 1936 a conference of vocational-guidance officers called by the Hon. the Minister of Education made a series of important recommendations for the development of vocational guidance in the Dominion, beginning with the establishment of a vocational-guidance centre in each of the four principal cities, in charge of a vocational-guidance officer with the assistance in the schools as vocational advisors of teachers having some special training and some freedom from ordinary class-work in order to get together data about the children for the information of the chief vocational-guidance officer. In the absence of special financial provision in the Education vote for the year 1936-37, consideration of the proposals of the conference was necessarily postponed to the next financial year.

The number of schools, including technical high schools and combined schools, offering full-time day technical courses remains the same as in the previous year. In nearly every case an increase of roll number is shown over the number for the corresponding period of 1935. Enrolments in combined and technical high schools numbered 6,283 boys and 5,113 girls on the 1st July, 1936, as against 6,282 boys and 4,943 girls on the 1st July, 1935. It is instructive to note that the increase of numbers was due to an increase within the age-group thirteen to sixteen years, accompanied by a slight drop in the number below thirteen years of age, and a sensible drop in the number of pupils over sixteen years of age.

Enrolments in evening classes at the 1st July, 1936, numbered 8,337 males and 3,407 females, as against 7,145 males and 3,217 females at the same date in 1935.

Last year increases in evening classes were mainly in clerical pursuits, but this year the increases are well distributed over the various courses, and reflect the conditions of industrial employment, in which an increase of apprentices has been naturally accompanied by an increase in attendance at technical classes in technological subjects.