

right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system. The structure of the New Zealand school system as originally laid down (and, indeed, of practically all the school systems of the world) was based on the principle of *selection*. An elementary education in the three Rs was given to all the population, but, beyond that, schooling had to be either bought by the well-to-do, or won, through scholarships, by the specially brilliant. Under such a system post-primary education was a thing apart from primary education and tended to be verbal and academic in nature. A definite penalty was placed on the children of the poor, especially on those who lived outside the main centres of population.

From the beginning of this century the rigour of this selective system has been progressively relaxed. New Zealand has moved far more rapidly in this respect than the countries of the Old World, and had, even before 1935, given a large measure of free education even at the higher levels. Yet the principle of selection for post-primary and higher education remained, and the present Government was the first to recognize explicitly that continued education is no longer a special privilege for the well-to-do or the academically able, but a right to be claimed by all who want it to the fullest extent that the State can provide. Important consequences follow from the acceptance of this principle. It is not enough to provide more places in schools of the older academic type that were devised originally for the education of the gifted few. Schools that are to cater for the whole population must offer courses that are as rich and varied as are the needs and abilities of the children who enter them: this means generous equipment, more and better-trained teachers, and some system of guidance to help pupils to select the schools and courses that will best cater for their abilities. It means also, if there is to be true equality of opportunity, that, by one method or another, the country child must be given access to the facilities from which he has always tended to be barred by the mere accident of location. Most important of all, perhaps, it means that the system of administrative control must be such that the whole school system is a unit within which there is free movement.

It is only against this historical background that the Government's policy in education can be fully understood. It was necessary to convert a school system, constructed originally on a basis of selection and privilege, to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as is found possible and desirable. I would wish the achievements of the past year, as outlined in this report, to be seen against this background and to be judged according to their furtherance of the aims here discussed.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL.

The present system of educational administration under which the post-primary schools are controlled by local authorities that are quite independent of those controlling the primary schools is a relic of the period when the post-primary schools were thought of as providing for a selected few an education alternative to rather than subsequent to that given in the primary schools. As soon as it is recognized that every child should have post-primary education of a kind for which he is best fitted a closer relationship between all schools, primary and post-primary, becomes essential, in order that the individual should be free to move easily from school to school or from course to course with adequate guidance at each stage. It therefore becomes necessary to place all the schools in an area under a single controlling authority. This was the main purpose of the Education Amendment Bill introduced during the year. After its first reading the Bill was referred to the Education Committee of the House of Representatives, which proceeded to consider its provisions and to take evidence from a wide range of interested bodies. To facilitate full and free discussion of the Bill I approved of the Technical Education Association and the Boards in control of secondary schools spending public funds to arrange meetings