

NATIONAL EDUCATION CAPITATION, AND TEACHERS' SALARIES.

Out of the statutory capitation of £3 15s. per annum on the average attendance, which is paid to the Boards of Education, these Boards have to pay teachers' salaries and allowances, the incidental expenses of School Committees, and their own office expenses, together with the cost of the inspection of schools; receiving, however, an additional grant of £4,000 per annum towards this last item. The circumstances of the various Boards are very different, and it is practically impossible for the Boards of the smaller districts, and even for the larger Boards (such as Auckland) in whose districts small schools are numerous, to pay salaries equal to those paid in districts in which there is a greater number of large schools. The consequent anomalies and irregularities in the salaries of teachers occupying similar positions in different parts of the colony are such as certainly exist in connection with no other department of the public service, and probably in no other class of workers in the colony; yet it cannot be said that the highest salaries are by any means too high. So many issues were involved that it seemed best to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole question. The report of the Commissioners contains two scales of staffs and salaries for public schools: the first, which involves an expenditure of £4 per head on the average attendance in all the public schools of the colony, is a vast improvement on the existing conditions. The second, which the Commission strongly recommends, is on the basis of £4 2s. 6d. per head: it has the same general features as to staffing and salaries as the first, but the salaries are higher by about £5 all round, except in the smallest schools, where the first scale is already sufficiently liberal; the salaries under the second scale, in fact, would mean, with very few exceptions, a general levelling-up. As to the exceptions, the Commission suggests that for two years no salaries should be lowered, and, as the cost of the concession would be trifling, this suggestion may readily be adopted without interfering with the general scheme.

Since January of the present year, with the £3 15s. statutory capitation and the special vote of 5s. per head, the total payments have been at a rate practically equivalent to a capitation of £4 on the total average attendance. Last year the appropriation for capitation was £398,000; this year £416,200 is required to be voted, which is £18,200 in excess of the amount voted last year. Next year—the finances of the colony permitting, as I believe they will—we hope to be able to provide for the payment of teachers on the second scale recommended.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

The administration of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of last session has engaged the attention of the Government during the recess. Organizing Inspectors have been appointed, and the regulations required to give effect to the Act have been issued. The terms of these regulations, I believe, are such as to offer a degree of encouragement to manual and technical education as liberal as is offered by the State in any part of the world. The Inspectors have already visited nearly every part of the colony, have met teachers and others interested, giving model lessons and such information and advice as will enable local controlling authorities to begin work on the best lines, or to extend their work where it has been already begun. The Inspectors have also in hand a series of small manuals suggesting suitable programmes of work in manual and technical classes. One of the most satisfactory features of the movement is the degree of interest that is being manifested in regard to the introduction of hand-and-eye training into the schools of the colony. Inasmuch as trained teachers are essential for effective work, special grants have been given to all the Boards of Education to enable them to establish classes for giving manual instruction to teachers. The extension of technical education proper will be sufficiently indicated when I say that since the passing of the Act there have been some forty or fifty applications for grants in aid of buildings, apparatus, and material.

The expenditure under the head of technical instruction, exclusive of grants for building, for the year ending 31st March, 1901, was £2,690; the expenditure