

to the present time there seems to be no disposition on the part of the Department to take the Board into confidence in this matter. In the meantime the Board has done its best to improve the remuneration of teachers of small country schools, although it was necessary to reduce the higher salaries in order to do so. The vote of an addition to the capitation grant for teachers' salaries will, it is hoped, enable the Board to complete the work begun last year of providing a more liberal scale of payment to its teachers.

ATTENDANCE.—There has been no material change in the roll-number of scholars during the year, but the working-average for the last quarter of 1900 shows an advance of nearly a thousand upon that of the last quarter of 1899. There has been no serious epidemic during the year. In spite of the efforts made to secure a compliance with the requirements of the School Attendance Act, there are still over four thousand children—more than one-seventh of the whole number—daily absent from school. From correspondence which has reached the Board, there seems to be an idea among some School Committees that the provisions of the Act are optional rather than mandatory. The Truant Officer and his assistant have succeeded in bringing about an improvement in the attendance. An amendment of the Act is desirable in order to check the growth of truancy; but the Board does not approve the proposal to utilise the services of police constables as truant officers. The Board is glad to learn that the Government have decided to adopt the working average as the permanent basis of attendance for all purposes.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Twenty-four senior and fifty-three junior scholarships were under tenure at the end of the year, besides five held by girls under special regulations and derived from the income of the Auckland Girls' High School Endowment. Satisfactory reports are received from time to time upon the conduct and diligence of the holders.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—Classes in manual instruction have been held at the Devonport and Remuera Schools. The Board has urged upon the Government the need of better provision being made for the maintenance of the Auckland Technical School, for which a suitable building is needed. It is hoped that under the new Act and regulations something may be accomplished towards placing Auckland on a better footing in the matter of technical instruction.

FINANCE.—The statement of accounts shows that the year began with a balance of £353 2s. 6d. in hand. The total income from all sources was £105,904 7s. 8d., and the expenditure was £102,755 11s. 11d. At the end of the year there was an unexpended balance of £3,501 18s. 3d. in hand. These figures include both Maintenance Account and Building Fund.

In Maintenance Account, the statutory capitation grant of £3 15s. was applied (approximately) as follows: Teachers' salaries and allowances, £3 4s. 1d. per head; grants to School Committees, including small repairs, 6s. 2d. per head; inspection and examination, 2s. 1d. per head; cost of Board's management, 1s. 10d. per head; unexpended, 10d. per head. (In 1899 the expenditure on maintenance amounted to £3 16s. 3d. per head.) The income on this account is dependent to a large extent upon circumstances beyond the control of the Board; and it is prudent to keep a small reserve in hand towards meeting any emergency which may arise through weather, sickness, or other cause.

The expenditure on school buildings during the year amounted to £12,066 16s. 10d., of which a large portion was applied to the improvement of existing buildings. At the end of the year the Board was committed to liabilities amounting to nearly £1,000 in excess of assets on this account, besides having to provide for other necessary works estimated to cost more than £10,000. Many works have to be delayed for want of funds. The provision made in the yearly grants voted by Parliament for school buildings is, as it has ever been, totally inadequate to meet requirements. The Board has not neglected to urge this want upon the attention of Government, and a special application was made (without any effect) for assistance towards providing teachers' residences.

BUILDINGS.—Ten new schools have been built, and four schools have been rebuilt after destruction by fire. Nine residences have been erected. Additional accommodation has been provided in eleven schools and in two residences. A large outlay has been incurred in necessary repairs and improvements to existing buildings. Two competent and experienced foremen carpenters are employed continuously in this work. In spite of the utmost economy, there are still many urgent requirements which the Board is obliged to postpone indefinitely for lack of funds. In several instances such postponement is likely to be attended with serious injury to the health of children and teachers. The Board would again impress upon Government the absolute necessity for dealing promptly and liberally with the requirements of the Auckland District in regard to buildings, and especially in regard to teachers' residences. Special assistance has been received from Government towards the cost of providing buildings in newly settled districts.

MISCELLANEOUS.—In accordance with section 98 of the Education Act, the inspection and examination of twenty-one Roman Catholic private schools were undertaken by the Inspectors and carried out at the cost of the Board during the year. The Board is of opinion that the inspection of private schools should be undertaken by and at the cost of the State.

A systematic effort has been made to improve and extend the instruction in military drill. An experienced instructor has been appointed to direct the teachers. Cadet corps are being formed in several of the larger schools, and a supply of model rifles has been received from Government for their use, subject to the approved regulations.

The cordial relations between the School Committees and the Board have been maintained during the year. Much valuable assistance is afforded by the Committees in carrying out the administration of the Act, and the fullest consideration has been given to their advice and recommendations in regard to school matters, so far as is consistent with the interests of the education district as a whole.

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L. J. BAGNALL, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.