

erected. Last year I deemed it necessary to point out that school buildings were urgently required at Port Awanui, Waipiro, Mohaka, and Puketitiri; but these by no means are the only places where schools are conducted in buildings that are not the property of the Board. At Whakaraui Nos. 1 and 2, Tokomaru, Morere, Tamumu, Makaretu South, Ngapaeruru, Waipatiki, and Ti-tree Point, schools are carried on in places that do duty as places of instruction, but the teaching is beset with many and trying difficulties. At Mohaka and Waipiro the children are largely composed of the Native race, and had the districts been under the control of the Central Department fully equipped buildings would long since have been provided. To me it appears a very strange thing that provision cannot be made for the children of settlers, when so much is done by the Government in the erection of Native schools. In my opinion, it would be far better for the Board to close the schools at Mohaka and Waipiro than carry on as at present. The responsibility of providing accommodation would then rest on the Department in Wellington, and perhaps there would soon be supplied what ought to have been supplied ten years ago for the benefit of the children in those settlements.

The districts where school accommodation is provided do not show any signs of crowding at present, except at Dannevirke, where further extension is called for. Most of the buildings are in good working order, but the depredations of the borer-beetle are becoming more serious in a number of the schools. It would be well, I think, to require teachers to inform the Board of the appearance of the "borer" whenever discovered, because a few shillings expended on turps and kerosene will certainly delay, if not destroy, the ravages of this dreaded enemy of white-pine.

The painting of the school buildings of one characteristic type is a great improvement, and certainly it may be said that for general neatness and appearance the public school sets an example to both town and district. I should like, however, to see some attention paid by teachers and Committees to tree-planting, particularly to the planting and naming of native trees and shrubs. It would be a good plan to have both native and imported trees for the instruction of the children, and Arbor Day might well be set aside for the furtherance of this suggestion, in places where nothing has yet been done.

Gardens are becoming very popular in a number of districts, but Ormond excels all others in this important aspect of school training. One hundred and thirty-five named varieties of plants and flowers were under cultivation by the children and I have seldom seen a prettier sight than the school gardens presented when visited by me in March. Gisborne, Patutahi, Woodville, Dannevirke, Makotuku, and Takapau present grounds of exceptional neatness, but there are far too many that supply evidence of much indifference on the part of teachers and Committees.

The changes in the teaching staff during the year have been more frequent than usual. In some of the middle-sized schools, where at present capable and highly classed men are at work, there is a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction. Some of them complain that they do not receive the same chances of promotion as in the case of assistant teachers of much less experience in the larger schools. The objections they make appear to me as being reasonable, and it would be a very good thing for the larger schools if more heed were given by Committees to the selection of highly classed and successful teachers from the country. No men have more difficulties in the way of training children, and rare skill and tact are necessary to carry on with much success the working of a fairly large country school. The wide differences of salary paid to assistants in the principal schools, and the headmasters in the majority of country schools, where a wife and family have usually to be maintained, may in some measure account for the dissatisfaction that no doubt exists among country teachers; and I think that an amended salary scale, to come into operation as vacancies occur, might be adopted, such as would provide a better balance of salary for the classes of teachers named, and it would certainly tend to keep good men from seeking employment in other directions.

The scale regulations for the payment of pupil-teachers appear to foster the employment of females rather than males in the schools. The fewness of male pupil-teachers is striking, and yet there is an abundance of female teachers. My own opinion is, after an experience with pupil-teachers extending over thirty years, that it would be well for education were the so-called pupil-teacher system utterly abolished, and a more rational and efficient scheme adopted. In no other profession are men who are employed during the day called upon to instruct and prepare for examination their apprentices under compulsory conditions; and were an arrangement provided, as there ought to be, for the training of young people in the art of teaching before being sent into the schools to teach, as they now are, an important step would have been taken in improving the educational condition of the schools. A professor of pedagogy at a university college may be fashionable just now, but such a man is quite useless for the making of efficient teachers such as are wanted in this country, and until something is done in the way of training young teachers without the intermediate pupil-teacher course there appears to me but little hope of seeing a high average standard of efficiency reached in the schools. When one sees a sixth-class pupil suddenly transformed into a class-teacher it is little wonder that defects occur in the preparation of children. Reasonable intelligence, duly exercised on matters of every-day life, should suffice to show even the non-technical mind how little real progress is to be expected in the higher aspects of training when boys and girls whose own education is far from complete are appointed to train other children, and supply a foundation on which all after-conceptions have really to be based. The five hours of weekly instruction that the Board's regulations require to be given to the pupil-teachers are greatly extended by head teachers in many cases, and I am satisfied that no class of workers in the colony toil harder than do the pupil-teachers under the present system of training and instruction.

The school attendance has shown an improving tendency during the second half of the school year, but the "Premier's holidays," for Mafeking, &c., whilst exceedingly popular and highly