

district. The liberal provision now made for scholarships and free tuition is much appreciated, but the Board felt called upon to direct attention to the large number of examinations which it is found necessary to hold, and it is worthy of consideration whether teacher's certificate, Civil Service, pupil-teachers', matriculation, and the various scholarship examinations should not be held simultaneously, and success in one constitute a partial pass in the others. This is the case to a very limited extent now, but the practice might be extended and systematized with advantage.

NEW SYLLABUS.—The new syllabus was, on the whole, very cordially received by the Board and its teachers, and there is no doubt but that it will have a very beneficial effect in broadening and modernising our educational system.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION.—The efforts of the Board to establish a thoroughly efficient system of technical education have not been relaxed, and some progress has been made, although there are still many who fail to realise the necessity of this very important branch of education. At Stratford an admirable building has been erected, and as soon as some necessary workshops and outbuildings, &c., have been completed, the building will be brought into use. The cost of the main building will be £1,084 11s., which is being found by the Government. Of this sum £894 10s. 2d. was spent at the end of the year. The foundation-stone was laid on the 30th July by the Hon. C. H. Mills, Minister of Customs, and on the 28th December the same Minister opened a very successful industrial exhibition in aid of its funds in the nearly completed building. At New Plymouth the question of site remains unsettled. The matter has been advanced somewhat, however, an Act having been passed through Parliament vesting St. Michael's Square—the site chosen, and previously the property of the New Plymouth Borough Council—in the School Commissioners, in exchange for certain education reserves at the west end of the town, with the view of having the square declared a school-site, in accordance with the power vested in the School Commissioners by the Education Reserves Act. In this connection the thanks of the Board are due to Mr. James Mackenzie, Commissioner of Crown Lands for Taranaki, for assistance given in arranging details of the Exchange Bill, also to Messrs Smith, Jennings, Symes, and Major, Ms.H.R., for securing the passing of the Act. During the year plumbing classes, in theory and practice, were established at New Plymouth and Stratford. An examination held at the conclusion of the first course showed that the instruction had been on sound lines. School classes, under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act, have been established, and are progressing satisfactorily in a number of schools.

QUEEN'S SCHOLARSHIPS.—Of the six scholarships under the Victoria College Act two came to this education district. This is a pleasing testimony to the standard of education, particularly as the winners were both at the time holding Board scholarships. The passing of the Queen's Scholarship Act of last session has, however, seriously reduced the value of these scholarships, the conditions being altogether changed. On the ground that no notice was given to any of the candidates (whose entries were in before the Act was passed), the Board entered a strong protest against the injustice done to this year's candidates. It is to be hoped the Legislature, when all the facts are before them, will set the matter right.

MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS.—The decision of the Minister of Education to adopt the recommendation of the Committee of the House in the distribution of the Government grant has given great satisfaction. For years, owing to the demand for new buildings, much-needed repairs and painting have had to be held over. Although the grant has been somewhat reduced, the whole of it will now be applied to maintain and improve existing buildings, and it is reasonable to expect that in a few years a considerable improvement will be seen in the condition of our buildings.

NEW BUILDINGS.—In connection with grants for new schools much greater expedition on the part of the Department is necessary. The Board is very careful and thoroughly investigates every application for a new school, or the enlargement of existing schools, before making a claim on the Department. The delay which often takes place before these claims are recognised is unjust to the children, who are rapidly passing beyond school age, and unfair to the Board. The delay in forwarding instalments of grants for buildings in progress is also a source of embarrassment to the Board. On the occasion on which the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, P.C., Minister of Education, passed through the district in December, the Chairman and Mr. Wade waited on him, and, amongst the matters brought under the notice of the Minister, they suggested that the Department should adopt a model plan of school buildings—plans, specifications, and cost of erection to be supplied by the Department—the Board, if necessary, supervising the erection. The Minister agreed there was much to be said in favour of the idea, and promised to give it consideration. Since then several Boards have expressed approval of the idea.

RETIREMENT AND DEATH OF HON. W. C. WALKER.—It was with very much regret and deep sorrow that the Board learned of the retirement and subsequent death of the late Minister of Education. Mr. Walker's kind and practical sympathy with the difficulties of this Board had earned him the esteem of every member, and the Board hoped he would live long to enjoy a well-earned rest from the cares of office and the honour conferred upon him by the Legislative Council. This was not to be, and the Board, at the time, by resolution expressed its sense of the great loss which the whole colony had sustained.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RIGHT HON. R. J. SEDDON, P.C.—On the first occasion on which the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, P.C., passed through the district on his assuming the position of Minister of Education, the Chairman, with Mr. Wade and the Secretary, waited on him on behalf of the Board, and tendered him the Board's congratulations.

FRANKING PRIVILEGE.—During the year an intimation was received from the Department that it was proposed to withdraw from Boards the privilege of franking correspondence. In reply to representations of this and other Boards, the privilege has so far been continued, and will not, it is hoped, be withdrawn.