

GENERAL VIEW OF THE NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION SYSTEM.

The education system of New Zealand differs very materially from the systems in vogue in the Australian States. In Australia each State has its central Department, controlling, from the capital, the minutest details of administration. In New Zealand decentralisation has been the aim. The colony is divided into thirteen districts, and the administration of education in each district is placed in the hands of a local Education Board. A central Department at Wellington, presided over by the Minister of Education, exercises general control, and allots the grants for instruction and administration, for maintenance of buildings, and for the erection of new buildings. It also prescribes the syllabus of instruction in schools. But all the details of administration, the building of schools, repairs to existing buildings, the appointment and payment of teachers and Inspectors, the working of the compulsory clause, &c., are intrusted to the Education Boards. The system is still further decentralised by allotting definite functions to School Committees. The members of Education Boards and of School Committees receive no fees for their services.

The School Committee.

The School Committee is a most important factor in New Zealand educational administration. Every school has its Committee; it matters not whether the school has an attendance of 800 or 18. The Committee varies in size from five to nine members, according to the size of the school. Committees are elected annually by the householders of the district, gathered in public meeting. Subject to the general supervision and control of the Education Board of the district, and to inspection by an Inspector, who is an officer of the Board, the Committee often has a large share of the management of educational affairs within the school district, and administers the School Fund—*i.e.*, certain moneys granted by the Board, together with donations and subscriptions raised locally. The extent to which the Committee is used varies somewhat under different Education Boards, but, on the whole, the School Committee is a most useful aid in administration, especially in dealing with purely business matters, such as repairs to schools, the raising of funds locally for providing apparatus and school comforts, advising in the selection of school-sites, providing for the adequate cleaning and general maintenance of the school and other such matters. The Committee has also an important duty in the administration of the compulsory clause. One function of the Committee, which will, no doubt, seem strange to Victorians, is its power in connection with the selection and appointment of teachers. In Victoria the people served by the school have no voice in the selection of the teacher; his appointment is purely a departmental matter. In New Zealand the vacancies are advertised, and applications from qualified teachers are sent in to the Education Boards. The Boards, from the records of teachers, and with the advice of their Inspectors if necessary, make a list of the most suitable applicants. This list is sent to the Committee, and the Committee makes a choice from the names on the list. Thus the Committee chooses the teacher, but only with the approval of the Education Board.

The Education Board.

The Education Board, which has its offices in the most important towns of the province, controls the educational administration of the province. It consists of nine members, elected by the members of School Committees voting as individuals. The Education Boards appoint a Secretary, Inspectors of Schools, teachers, and other officers necessary for the carrying-out of their work, and they are allowed to appropriate for the purposes of general management, irrespective of teaching, a fixed proportion of the capitation grant paid to them by the central Department for instruction. It will be observed that all of the persons employed in the actual work of teaching, or of supervision, or of administration, are servants of the Board, and not of the central Department. The methods of administration, therefore, vary considerably in the different provinces, and there are great discrepancies in the salaries paid to officers; but the teachers, since the coming into force of the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act in 1901, have been paid according to a scale which applies to every district in the colony. This Act provided that the money voted for the administration of the Education Act shall be sufficient to pay to the Board of every district (a) the salaries of teachers and pupil-teachers in the district, in accordance with the new scale, and (b) a sum of £250 per annum, and, in addition, a capitation grant of 11s. 3d. per annum for each child in average daily attendance at a public school. It is understood that the provision above is sufficient for the salaries of teachers and of administrative officers, and for other expenses of administration.

As regards buildings and upkeep, special grants are made by the central Department. These grants have in the past been based mainly upon the average attendance of children to be provided for by the Board. In perusing the figures showing the expenditure under "Buildings" thus incurred by the central Department I could not but be struck with the fact that the amounts provided each year were approximately the same. This is in striking contrast to the system followed in respect of buildings in Victoria during the past fifteen years, and, as a consequence, the distressing problem of overtaking belated repairs is not in evidence in New Zealand.

The above are the main sources of revenue of the Education Boards, but various grants fixed by capitation have from time to time been made for special purposes; thus, a capitation of 1s. 6d. on the average daily attendance is voted for the maintenance of scholarships tenable at secondary schools; a special capitation payment is made for various forms of manual instruction, and, generally speaking, when changes have been made throwing increased duties upon the Boards, special capitation grants have been introduced.

Higher Primary and Secondary Education.

The above remarks apply specially to the administration of elementary education. The Education Boards, however, have control of district high schools, in which a more advanced education is given. Up till recently, although these schools were under the direct control of the Education Boards of the