

Boards of Advice should certainly be given increased duties and responsibilities, or be abolished altogether. How can intelligent men and women, with a sense of the value of their time, be expected to travel long distances to attend meetings of a Board whose chief duties are a few quarterly investigations of default in attendance, the granting of four odd holidays to schools, and the supervision of repairs to an amount not exceeding per annum £5 upon each school? Even with the present centralised system it should be easy to devise means whereby purely business concerns, such as general repairs to schools, the maintenance of class-rooms, and the general supervision of arrangements for the comfort of the scholars, might be intrusted to the Boards.

However, it seems to me that a fatal weakness in the present system lies in giving a Board control over several schools in a district. Unless a very great change is wrought in the direction of decentralisation, sufficient power cannot be intrusted to district Boards to encourage the best men in a community to devote the time and attention necessary to the supervision of a district. Such work as I have indicated is properly the function of a School Committee. I can readily imagine efficient School Committees, representing the householders served by the school, doing excellent work in promoting the well-being of their own school, and contending in generous rivalry with the neighbouring schools. Such Committees might well foster local pride and feeling for "our school," and might well make its welfare a live question in the district. The work of the School Committees of New Zealand is seen in the excellent condition of the buildings, the playgrounds, apparatus, fencing, &c. Nor must it be supposed that they have merely spent moneys granted to them. The regulations of the Otago Education Board, after rehearsing the amounts contributed each year by the Board out of their grant to the "School Fund" of schools of different sizes, run,—

The sums contributed to the "School Fund" under the above scale are intended to meet the cost of cleaning school buildings and premises, sweeping chimneys, providing fuel for school-rooms, making all necessary repairs to school buildings, premises, and fences; repairing the school appliances, furniture, apparatus, &c.; improving the school grounds; and the expenses incurred in connection with the Committees' meetings and correspondence. The Board cannot undertake to make any further allowance for the above purposes. No portion of the Board's contribution to the "School Fund" shall be spent on prizes, certificates of good attendance, fêtes, or entertainments. Committees may purchase out of the "School Fund" pens, penholders, ink, and pencils for the pupils' use in school, and writing-paper and blotting-paper for their use at the examinations.

To encourage Committees to improve the condition of the school and grounds under their charge, the Board will be prepared to subsidise at the rate of £1 for £1 all moneys raised locally and expended wholly on the undermentioned works: Asphalting grounds, renewal of fencing of school premises and glebes, painting and papering interior of residences, painting and distempering the interior of schools, erecting shelter-sheds. A subsidy shall on no account be paid unless the Board's sanction to the expenditure has been obtained prior to the works being carried out, and all applications for such sanction must be accompanied by a full statement of the proposed works and an estimate of their cost.

From a return furnished me by Mr. P. G. Pryde, Secretary of the Board, it appears that the School Committees of the Otago District have collected in voluntary subscriptions a sum of £7,298 during the past three years. This local subscription, I was assured, had averaged over £2,000 per annum for many years. The school district of Otago has a population about one-tenth of that of Victoria. As a result, every school of any size in the Otago District is supplied with a good gymnasium, playgrounds are well asphalted and kept, and teachers are comfortably housed. Other School Boards can show as good a record of the work of their Committees. Here is one way in which Victoria can follow New Zealand's lead.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS, AND SCHOOL FURNITURE.

Victoria has much to learn from New Zealand in the matter of supply and maintenance of buildings and grounds. It is no unusual sight in our State to find even in country districts a school and a teacher's residence placed on a single-acre block. In New Zealand I was much impressed with the consideration and forethought which have been shown in providing ample space for the children and the teacher. Playgrounds of large size are the rule; and the teacher invariably has his portion of glebe land for cultivation or other use. Education Boards have wisely refused to build unless an ample area is given them, and I was informed that the Southland Board, for example, had determined not to build a school upon less than a 7-acre block. Of course, there are, as with us, many examples of wretchedly small playgrounds attached to city schools, but, generally speaking, the comfort and convenience of the children and the teachers have been studied throughout the colony to a much greater extent than in Victoria. I feel strongly that we should amend our methods while there is yet time, and should insist upon at least 3 acres for our small schools, with provision for the teacher's residence in addition, and that in towns and cities the attempt should be made to increase playground-space wherever it is possible.

Teachers' Residences.

I inspected many of the residences belonging to the schools. Although I made no selection, but visited all the schools along the road I was travelling, in no case did I see residences of the poor type provided for the Victorian teacher, or so poorly maintained. In the great majority of cases the house of the Victorian teacher is either a lean-to or is attached to the schoolhouse, and all noises from house or school can be heard through the thin partitions. Distractions to school-work and discomfort to the teacher's family result. Moreover, there is often a serious menace to the health of the children on the one hand, or to the teacher's family on the other, when infectious diseases are rife. It is no unusual experience to lose the work of a school on account of infectious illness in the teacher's residence. The New Zealand teacher is housed comfortably at a little distance from the school. He has a roomy cottage and his own domain, and, accordingly, his home is a genuine home with its garden and poultry-yard and paddocks, not a mere appendage to a public building with no privacy and no comfort. It is not mere sentiment, but shrewd common-sense to pay attention to these matters. The real and permanent influence which a teacher exerts on a district depends on what he is in himself, not on what he knows, or on what he says in the class-room. Above all questions of administration, of methods of teaching,