

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 20th February, 1908.

In accordance with the provisions of section 166 of "The Education Act, 1904," I have the honour to submit the annual report of the Education Board of the District of South Canterbury of the year ending 31st December, 1907.

THE BOARD.—At the beginning of the year the Board was composed of the following members: Messrs. G. W. Armitage, W. M. Hamilton, C. S. Howard, W. B. Howell, John Jackson, George Lyall, J. S. Rutherford, Thomas Sherratt, and the Rev. G. Barclay. In accordance with the provisions of "The Education Act Amendment Act, 1905," it was decided by lot that Messrs. Hamilton, Jackson, and Rutherford should retire during the year, and all three were re-elected. Owing to failing health Mr. Howell felt compelled to resign his position as a member of the Board in August after serving almost continually from the establishment of the Board in 1878. Mr. Howell was Chairman for eleven years, and on his retirement was presented with a handsome piece of silver. In August Mr. Jackson was elected Chairman. The Board held twelve meetings during the year, the average attendance of members being 7.5.

THE SCHOOLS.—There were seventy-six schools in operation at the end of the year, the same number as for 1906. During the year a side school was opened in the public hall at the township of Pareora East to save the younger children the walk to Springbrook or Kingdown. Applications for new schools at Cannington, Allandale, and Rakitairi were forwarded to the Department for the consideration of the Minister.

TEACHERS.—At the end of the year there were 153 teachers in the service of the Board—121 adults and 22 pupil-teachers, 61 males and 92 females. Of the adult teachers eighteen were uncertificated, occupying chiefly positions in small country schools. There is still a good deal of dissatisfaction among teachers regarding their salaries, which are made to vary with the average attendance of the schools. The year 1907 was remarkable for the succession of epidemics which visited the district, and by lowering the attendance caused decreases in the salaries of many teachers. The teachers affected are mostly old servants of the Board whose salaries were, before, anything but liberal, and whose interest in their work must be affected by these decreases in pay. It is hoped that the Minister will no longer delay the promised redress to the teachers by making salaries almost, if not entirely, independent of attendance. At the end of the year eighteen of the Board's teachers suffered reductions totalling £247 5s., and amounting in some cases to about 20 per cent. of the previous salaries.

SUPERANNUATION.—During the year 136 teachers and others contributed to the funds. Only nine adult teachers in the Board's service, who have the option to contribute, have declined to do so.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The annual scholarship examinations took place in December, the number of candidates being, for Junior Scholarships 30, for Senior Scholarships 20. Ten Junior and six Senior, and the Junior National Scholarship were awarded.

PHYSICAL DRILL.—The Inspectors report that physical instruction receives full attention at the hands of the teachers of all the larger schools, some of whom devote much of their spare time ungrudgingly to the training of their pupils in a great variety of exercises calculated to develop their bodies and improve their health. In most of the smaller schools the teachers make a faithful effort to give due prominence to this part of their work.

ATTENDANCE.—At the end of the year there were 76 schools, 153 teachers, 5,285 pupils on the roll, 4,538 in average attendance (December quarter). The roll-number shows an increase of ninety over that of the previous year, but the yearly average attendance (4,506) shows a decrease of fifty-nine. This fall in attendance is no doubt due to the prevalence of epidemics of influenza, measles, and whooping-cough throughout the district. The average attendance expressed as a percentage of the mean of the average weekly roll-number for the four quarters was 85.9, showing a decrease of 2.3 for the year.

BUILDINGS.—During the year new residences have been built for the Pareora, Southburn, and Waitaki Schools. In March the Geraldine School was totally destroyed by fire—the work, it is supposed, of an incendiary. The rebuilding of the Pleasant Point School was under consideration, and it was decided to build a new school in brick on a new site of 5 acres. In May application was made for a grant for extensive additions to the Timaru Technical School, but, although the Department has been written to repeatedly on the matter, no definite reply has yet been received from the Minister.

In its new buildings the Board has tried to embody more modern ideas as to lighting, ventilation, &c. Many of the older rooms are very badly constructed in these respects, and in some cases the Board has been put to great expense to improve the rooms from a hygienic point of view. The question of school furniture is also one that is engaging considerable attention in different parts of the Dominion. If it were not for the extra expense required and the extra space occupied by them, there is no doubt that single desks have much to recommend them; but it is impossible with our present standard of 12 square feet per pupil in average attendance to provide these desks for all schools. The Board is at present obtaining single and dual desks of Canadian make, because these are found cheaper and far better than those made locally.

FINANCE.—The appended balance-sheet will show the receipts and expenditure for the year under various heads.

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JOHN JACKSON, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.