

to state that since the beginning of the present year the numbers have increased to twenty-one. The average attendance at each of the secondary departments of the high schools was as follows: Westport, 39; Reefton, 21; Motueka, 11; Takaka, 22.

ATTENDANCE.—The roll-number (5,832) and average attendance (4,992) again show an improvement upon the previous year. Though our increased attendance is not to be compared with the larger districts in the Dominion, still the progress made during the past six years has been steady. The percentage of attendance (85) cannot be regarded as good, though there are several causes which militate against securing a higher percentage, causes which probably are not found to the same extent in other districts. In localities where fruit and hops are extensively grown children are required to assist in gathering in crops, and owing to the length of the season it is with the utmost difficulty that some of the schools show any attendances at all during the first quarter of the year. Again, in sparsely populated settlements children may have to walk long distances to school, and naturally in the winter months the attendances registered are very poor. The Board has recently adopted a system by which monthly returns of attendance are supplied in the case of school districts where an improvement in the average attendance should be obtained. Steps will be taken by the Board to effect improved attendance where action appears to be necessary.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—This branch of instruction continues to receive adequate attention in the Board's schools. Under the new scheme for the control of junior cadets the number of cadet corps detachments will no doubt be increased.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—During the year the Board's scholarships have been further amended in the direction of providing for four £40 Junior Scholarships, which are open to pupils in the Board's schools who are not within daily reach of a high school or college. The value of the bursaries have been increased from £1 5s. a year to £2 a year. The qualifying examination for Junior Scholarships and bursaries is the Junior National Scholarship and Free Place Examination. One Senior Scholarship open to pupils attending the district high schools is provided each year by the Governors of Nelson College.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS.—All the private schools in the district that have made application to the Board have, in accordance with law, been inspected during the year by the Board's Inspectors.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL.—From the report of the Director of Technical Schools it will be noted that satisfactory results have obtained in this branch of education during the year. The number of students attending the various special classes throughout the district shows a substantial increase, whilst in the manual training classes efficient instruction has been given at the various class centres. The regulations for the control and management of manual and technical instruction in the district were revised and brought up to date, securing a more adequate and improved system of dealing with this now large and important branch of instruction. The Board sanctioned the starting of a technical day-school in Nelson this year, and trusts that the school will be well supported. The thanks of the Board are due to the Department for the very liberal manner in which they have provided grants to cover the cost of equipping the various technical schools with fittings and apparatus, and also to the local bodies who have so generously contributed to the support of the classes. Now that the schools have been provided with suitable equipment, and an efficient teaching staff secured, the Board expects that every attention will be devoted to securing systematic and thoroughly efficient instruction in every branch of the work. The report of the Director sets forth in detail the work carried on during the year.

BUILDINGS.—The rebuilding of several worn-out schools was undertaken during the year—viz., Cronadun, Summerlea—for these two the Department also provided grants for additions necessary owing to increases in attendance—and Wakefield. It was found necessary to spend comparatively large sums of money on the upkeep of a number of schools, whilst in Nelson the Board was compelled to rebuild nearly all the outbuildings connected with the city schools to adapt them to the requirements of the new drainage system which was put in hand by the Council. This latter work involved an amount of £500, which had to be provided out of the ordinary grant for maintenance of buildings. The Board cannot believe that when the basis of this grant was considered, such matters as new systems of drainage, the providing of half-cost of new sites, and the upkeep of teacher's residences, were taken into consideration; and the amount spent last year under these headings forms a fairly large proportion of the expenditure on buildings. The necessity of having to provide all schools with up-to-date equipment and fittings proved to be a considerable source of expense during the year. The reduction of the buildings grant for 1909 from £3,000 to £1,725, coupled with the above extraordinary expenditure, has placed the Board in a very serious condition financially, for, apart from the rebuilding of worn-out schools, large expenditure has, of necessity, to be incurred on the maintenance of buildings, more particularly in the southern portion of the district where climatic conditions are such as to compel constant repairs and renewals being made to schools. The Board hopes that during the coming session of Parliament the basis of the vote for school buildings will be reconsidered by the Education Committee, and suggests that the Boards of the Dominion be consulted as to the actual requirements for the adequate maintenance and rebuilding of schools.

FINANCE.—At the beginning of 1909 the Board had substantial credit balances on both the Buildings and General Account. At the end of the year, however, the Building Account was £1,349 12s. 5d. in debit, the General Account showing a credit of £759 9s. 5d., including £1,585 4s. School Commissioners' Reserves revenue, which, when deducted from the statutory grants, would place the account £825 14s. 7d. in debit. I have again to reiterate the request made in the report for 1907—viz., that the Department and the Audit Department should come to an agreement as to the form of balance-sheet for Education Boards.

THANKS.—The Board desires to thank School Committees for their faithful work during the year, and to place on record the satisfactory manner in which teachers and officers have performed their duties.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

A. T. MAGINNITY, Chairman.