

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Office, Wanganui, 27th April, 1915.

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, I have to present the following report of the proceedings of this Board for the year ending 31st December, 1914.

The Board.—The members whose term of office expired during the year were Messrs. F. M. Spurdle, T. A. Harris, and F. Pirani—representing the Northern, Central, and Southern Wards respectively—all of whom were re-elected unopposed. Mr. William Bruce was elected to the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. F. M. Spurdle. At the end of the year the Board, therefore, consisted of Messrs. E. Dixon, P. O'Dea, and W. Bruce (Northern Ward), F. Purnell, D. H. Guthrie, M.P., and T. A. Harris (Central Ward), and F. Pirani, G. H. Bennett, and A. Fraser (Southern Ward). At the annual meeting Mr. Pirani was re-elected Chairman for the eighth successive term. Thirteen meetings were held during the year, the average attendance of members being 7.3.

Schools.—During the year new schools were opened at Mangaohutu, Burnside, and Taumata (Grade 0), Makohine Valley (Grade I), and Naumanui (Grade II). Aratiki (Grade I) was reopened. The schools at Kaukatca, Tararua (Grade 0), Brownlee, and Poukiore (Grade I), were closed. There were open at the close of the year 209 main and three side schools. They were graded as follows: Grade 0, 11; I, 36; II, 39; III, 21; IV, 59; V, 12; VIA, 12; VIIA, 3; VIIB, 4; VIIIA, 4; VIIIB, 2; IIIC, 2; IXA, 2; IXB, 1; XB, 1.

Private Schools.—The Board's Inspectors visited twenty private schools, the number of pupils present on the occasion of the visits being 1,323. With the passing of the new Act these schools have passed out of the Board's sphere of control; but perhaps it is not out of place to again direct attention to the necessity for a close and careful supervision of schools of this class. In many of them the environment, the apparatus, the sanitary arrangements, as well as the lighting, heating, and ventilation, are far from satisfactory. If these schools are to be permitted to carry on, proper attention to the ordinary rules of hygiene in relation to the schoolroom should be a *sine qua non* to the granting of the application for registration.

Attendance.—On the 31st December there were 16,072 children on the rolls of the schools in the district, of which 194 were in attendance at the secondary departments of the district high schools. The average attendance for the year was 14,339, the December quarter being the highest with an average of 14,742. The average attendance expressed as a percentage of the average weekly roll was 90 per cent. as compared with 89.4 for the previous year. Comparing the roll number at the end of 1913 and the average attendance for that year, the figures for 1914 show an increase of 458 and 435 respectively. The Truant Officer continues to carry out his duties with tact and consideration. During the year he made 351 visits to schools. 217 summonses were issued against defaulting parents; 189 convictions were recorded, seventeen cases were withdrawn, and eleven dismissed. Although the attendance for this district expressed as a percentage of the roll number is not so high as in some districts, it may, under the conditions obtaining in parts of the country during the winter months, be considered satisfactory. Each year sees the return of epidemics, and during the past year the attendance suffered through the prevalence of measles, whooping-cough, diphtheria, &c.

Conveyance and Boarding Allowances.—At nine schools the system of conveying children to school is working satisfactorily. Boarding allowance is being paid to eleven children who are compelled to live away from home in order to attend school.

Teachers.—The number of teachers in the Board's service at the close of the year was 429, excluding relieving-teachers, probationers, and pupil-teachers. 180 were males and 249 females, the number holding certificates being 280. It will thus be seen that 149 or 34.7 per cent. were uncertificated, compared with 35.5 per cent. for 1913, and 45.6 per cent. for 1912. Of the uncertificated teachers, however, eleven were in charge of schools in Grade 0, thirty-two in charge of schools of Grade I; twenty-five in charge of schools in Grade II, and seven in charge of schools of Grade III. The remainder were assistant teachers. Every facility is given to uncertificated teachers to qualify; Saturday instruction classes and classes for tuition by correspondence being provided free of cost to the teachers who care to take advantage of them.

Pupil-teachers and Probationers.—There were in the service at the close of the year eleven male and fifty female pupil-teachers, and six male and twenty-four female probationers. Of these, twelve proceeded to the Training College at the beginning of the current year. The Board each year experiences considerable difficulty in inducing pupil-teachers and probationers to enter the College. To overcome this difficulty, candidates on appointment are now required to enter into an agreement to proceed to the College on completion of their term of service. It is therefore anticipated that in future years larger numbers from this district will take the Training College course.

Training of Teachers.—The preparation of teachers in certain subjects for certificate examinations was carried out by means of free Saturday instruction classes in drawing, agriculture, dairy science, hygiene, vocal music, English, school method, mathematics, at Hawera, Wanganui, Feilding, and Mangaweka; while free tuition in English, school method, mathematics, and Latin, by means of correspondence classes, was available for teachers who were not situated within easy reach of the railway. In addition, a winter school for country teachers was held in Wanganui for a period of two weeks in July.

Grants for Continuous Readers and School Libraries.—The amount expended on free continuous readers was £392 5s. The grants for school libraries are not taken advantage of to the extent that the Board would like to see. Only eighteen schools complied with the conditions laid down by the regulations, thus entitling them to grants in aid of the purchase of books. The total amount granted was £33 1s. 9d. It may be that the *School Journal* and the continuous readers, with which all classes are now liberally provided, supply all the reading-matter considered necessary. No school, however, can be considered complete without a well-equipped library.