

G. H. Gothard, E. J. Scantlebury, and D. J. Williams (West Ward). It is with great regret that I have to inform you that three members passed away during the year—namely, Mr. Easton, an ex-Chairman; Mr. Shepherd, one of the representatives of the West Ward; and Mr. Beuke, one of the representatives of the Middle Ward and a member for over twenty years. The vacancies were filled by the election of Messrs. W. C. Baigent, D. J. Williams, and T. Symes respectively. Twelve meetings were held during the year, the average attendance being seven. Mr. Smith was elected Chairman at the annual meeting.

*Primary Schools.*—The number of schools at the end of the year was 120, an increase of two on last year's figures. Thanks to the satisfactory provision made for the board and conveyance of children to enable them to attend school, the opening of household schools has been avoided in several instances. The Board is satisfied that in many cases the expenditure incurred on board and conveyance of children is better justified than the expenditure on salaries, &c., of household-school teachers.

*District High Schools.*—There are four district high schools—namely, at Westport, Reefton, Motueka, and Takaka. In the last report reference was made to the unsatisfactory attendance recorded at the secondary departments at Motueka and Takaka. I am glad to state that at each place an improvement in attendance has been made, and that the Committees at both schools are alive to the necessity of retaining the secondary departments.

*Private Schools.*—Fourteen schools were inspected during the year.

*Attendance.*—At the close of the year the total number of children on the rolls of the public schools was 6,539, an increase of seventeen on the figures for the previous year. The average attendance—5,833—is an improvement on last year's average—5,685—and to some extent may be accounted for by the absence of serious epidemics. The Board has no permanent Truant Officer, but cases of irregular attendance are dealt with in an effective way by a number of head teachers and the Board's Secretary.

*Medical Inspection and Physical Education.*—The teachers in this district were not put through the special course of training by the physical instructors until after the close of the year. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing the thanks of the Board for the training afforded to the teachers. The training was much appreciated by the teachers themselves, and the introduction of physical training in the schools is but another step in the direction of improving our education system. A visit was paid to some of the schools by the Medical Officer, Dr. Paterson, and her report on the whole was of a satisfactory nature. The proposed amalgamation of the medical inspection and physical education branches appears to be warranted, as the work of the medical branch has an important bearing on the other branch.

*Manual and Technical Instruction.*—[See E.-5. Report on Manual and Technical Instruction].

*Buildings.*—The principal works completed during the year were the contracts for the enlargement of the Westport brick school and the reinstatement of the old wooden school at Motueka. A school was erected at Aporo—a new settlement—and small schools were erected at Owen Junction, Tophouse, and Tutaki. Accommodation for school purposes was provided at Upper Sherry, and additions were made to the school at Tahuna. Before the close of the year contracts were entered into for the enlargement of the teacher's residence and school at Murchison. The Board has given every consideration to proposals for improving school buildings where possible, and in addition to the ordinary repairs a number of schools have been painted inside, and in two cases—at Richmond and Wakefield—new outbuildings in concrete and septic tanks have been provided, the former sanitary conveniences being wholly unsuitable for the schools named. The schools at Pakawau and Glenhope were removed to more convenient sites which were acquired by the Board. Sites were also acquired for a teacher's residence at Waiuta and for the new school at Millerton. I must express the Board's regret at the delay in dealing with the application for grant for erection of new school buildings at Millerton to replace the school destroyed by fire in August, 1913. The grant eventually provided—£1,600—is quite inadequate to cover the cost of the new school. The expenditure during the year under the heading of rebuildings was £1,865 17s., and on maintenance £2,955 3s. 3d.

*Finances.*—The balance-sheet discloses a net credit balance of £101 3s. 7d. £100 was given to the Empire Defence Fund. The credit balance on the Buildings Account was £3,828 0s. 9d., but on this account, as well as the Administration and Technical Accounts, large sums are due, which will increase the credit balance very considerably.

*Nelson Education Board.*—I cannot conclude the report without expressing the hope that in the readjustment of education districts under the new Act an education district with Nelson City as its chief town, and including the whole of the present district, will be provided for. It is not necessary to enumerate here our reasons for desiring to maintain our identity; suffice it to say that such a district as Nelson cannot be satisfactorily administered from a larger centre.

*Thanks.*—The relations with the various School Committees have been most cordial, and the Board desires to thank them for the help accorded in the management of the educational affairs of the district. To the Inspectors who cease to be officers of the Board under the new Act I extend the thanks of the Board for their loyal services, and express the hope that they may continue to be associated with the educational affairs of the Nelson District.

I have, &c.,

F. W. O. SMITH, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.