

*Medical Inspection.*—During the year the Department's Medical Inspector visited some of the larger schools in this district. In last year's report the Board recognized that a good beginning has been made with the medical examination of school-children, and hopes for the extension of the work as circumstances permit. At present only the larger schools are visited, and the examination is confined to those children in Standard II who appear to be suffering from some physical defect. As a nation's efficiency depends to a large extent on the physical soundness of its men and women, and in view of the fact that we are losing during the present titanic struggle the cream of our manhood, it behoves us to build up a vigorous manhood by laying the foundation in the children of to-day. To assist in attaining the desired object this Board and its officers are only too willing to assist in every possible way the Medical Inspector in improving the condition, both mental and physical, of our boys and girls.

*Physical Instruction.*—In last report the Board expressed the opinion that the time was ripe for another course of physical instruction to its teachers, and as a result of representations made to the Department steps were taken to hold early in January a "refresher course" under the direction of the Department's instructors. In spite of the fact that these training classes meant the curtailment of the Christmas holidays, the response made by the teachers to the invitation to attend these classes was so gratifying that the Board placed on record its appreciation of the readiness with which teachers had offered to attend the various classes for training. In view of the importance of physical training to the boys and girls attending our schools, the Board has arranged for a competition in physical exercises among the primary schools in Southland. The winning team obtains possession for one year of a handsome shield designed to perpetuate the memory of the late Mr. Galloway, at one time physical instructor to this Board, and presented to the Board by a committee consisting of some of the leading citizens of Invercargill. With the Medical Inspectors and physical instructors co-operating the results must be highly beneficial to the health and general welfare of our young people.

*Conveyance and Board of Children.*—The amount disbursed by the Board on the conveyance and board of children who live a long distance from the nearest public school was £1,527, as compared with £1,383 in 1915. There are seventy-two schools where parents have availed themselves of the provision thus made by the Department for educating their children—an increase of twenty-one as compared with the previous year. The Board still fails to see the reasonableness of the regulation which authorizes only half the cost of the conveyance of children between the ages of five and seven years, and respectfully recommends the Department to amend the regulation in the direction of allowing the full grant to the younger children. The Board again expresses the opinion contained in last year's report that riding-horses and bicycles should not be excluded from the means of conveyance on account of which the allowance will be made.

*School Committees.*—The Board desires to express its appreciation of the manner in which School Committees generally have co-operated in the management of the educational affairs of the district. During the year the incidental allowances paid to Committees have totalled £3,944, this sum being £553 in excess of the amount provided by the Government. The Board has been enabled to pay the larger sum owing to economy in various departments under its control. The Board, however, wishes to intimate to School Committees that the scale of payments for incidental expenses is to be reviewed in March, 1917, and, if necessary, modified. Even with the increased allowance the Board recognizes that many Committees, especially those of the lower-grade schools, have great difficulty in keeping on the right side of the ledger. The Board has insured School Committees against liability under the Workers' Compensation and Employers' Liability Acts so far as these apply to caretakers and casual workmen, provided that at the end of each year (31st December) School Committees show clearly on their balance-sheets the payments made for wages during the previous year.

*Board's Regulations.*—During the year the Board, in consequence of the coming into operation of the Education Act, 1914, was compelled to revise its regulations. These will be printed and circulated in due course.

*Buildings.*—The Board's building staff has been kept busy during the year. Additions were erected at Invercargill North, Otatau, and Tuatapere, and new sanitary conveniences in brick were erected at East Gore. Works now in hand are additions to the school at Mimiha, replacement of the old school at Myross Bush, and the erection of a new school at East Limehills. The residents of East Limehills showed their public-spiritedness by contributing a handsome sum towards the cost of the school buildings. The usual renovations of a number of schools and residences were undertaken. This work is now carried out entirely by the Board's workmen, and has been systematized in the direction of covering, in rotation every six years or thereabouts, all the school buildings in the district. When the workmen have finished at one school they move to the next nearest, and in this manner the renovations are effected without loss of time or needless expense in moving hither and thither. The Board finds, too, that with a competent staff it can erect new buildings or additions at a minimum cost, and generally of a more substantial nature. Dual desks of an improved pattern are about to be installed in a number of the larger schools. As funds permit the present long desks with which most of the schools are equipped will be replaced by the new furniture. Drainage, fencing, and other works have been attended to, and the buildings are, on the whole, in good order. The environment of a number of our schools, however, could be considerably improved by quickened interest on the part of Committees. A school building and its grounds ought to be cared for as a national institution of the first importance, and should form an object-lesson to the scholars and to the district in order, neatness, and beauty of surroundings.

*Finance and Accounts.*—For the year just closed the result of the Board's operations financially has been quite satisfactory. From a perusal of the balance-sheet it will be seen that the balance to credit of both General and Buildings Accounts has increased, the former by £1,035 14s. 4d., and the latter by £1,015 18s. 3d. In view of the conditions at present prevailing, however, it behoves the Board to exercise the strictest economy in administering its finances.

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DUNCAN GILCHRIST, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.