

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Education Board, Wellington, 31st March, 1918.

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Act, 1914, I beg to submit the following report of the Education Board of the District of Wellington for the year 1917 :—

Board.—The Board membership at the beginning of the year was the same as at the election of 1916, viz. :— Urban Areas : (1) Wellington City, and Boroughs of Karori, Onslow, and Miramar—Hon. J. G. W. Aitken, M.L.C. (Chairman), Messrs. William Allan, Thomas Forsyth, and R. A. Wright, M.P.; (2) Hutt and Petone—Messrs. G. T. London and E. P. Rishworth. Rural Area : (1) Hutt-Horowhenua Ward—Messrs. W. H. Field, M.P., and John Kebbell; (2) Wairarapa Ward—Messrs. A. W. Hogg and T. Moss; (3) Marlborough Ward—Messrs. E. H. Penny and A. Mackay. On the death of Mr. Alexander Mackay during the year Mr. R. McCallum, M.P., was elected to fill the resulting vacancy. The Board's Technical School representatives were unchanged.

Schools and Attendance.—Ten small schools were closed and six were opened, so that at the end of the year there were in operation 251 schools, a decrease of four since the end of 1916. A side school was opened at Seatoun. The mean of the average roll and of the average attendance for the year was: Average roll—Boys, 12,601; girls, 11,457; total, 24,058. Average attendance—Boys, 11,475; girls, 10,329; total, 21,804. The number on the roll at the end of the year was 24,360, compared with 23,726 at the end of 1916, an increase of 634. The average roll increased by 715 and the average attendance by 981. The average attendance was 90·6 per cent. of the average roll for the year. The regularity of attendance thus improved by 1·4 per cent., and but for prevalent sickness in the September quarter would have quite equalled that of 1915 (91 per cent.). The Board is of opinion that a legal penalty should be imposed on the unscrupulous employer who engages children still below the standard or age of exemption.

Teaching Staff.—The following were the numbers of teachers, pupil-teachers, and probationers in the service of the Board at the end of the year :—

	Men.	Women.	Totals.
Heads of schools	82	13	95
Sole teachers	22	135	157
Assistants	50	322	372
Total adults	154	470	624
Pupil-teachers	15	38	53
	169	508	677
Probationers	4	43	47
Totals, including pupil-teachers and probationers	173	551	724

The corresponding total for 1916 was 722.

A comparison of the numbers with those of 1913—the year preceding the war—shows that the proportion of male teachers (including probationers) has fallen from 32·2 per cent. to 23·9 per cent. of the whole number. Of forty pupil-teachers and probationers appointed since the end of 1917 only three were males, two other male applicants being rejected because they were unqualified. The present keen competition of both State Departments and commerce tends to divert from the teaching profession the most capable scholars as they leave our schools. Now, if it be admitted that the most precious possession of the State—its children—requires for their education the services of the most richly endowed with character and brains, it becomes evident that greater inducements must be offered if a sufficient supply is to be maintained of young teachers well equipped in both body and mind. Any advance in remuneration should certainly be to a minimum not less than that of entrance to the Civil Service. This point has been stressed in previous reports. The matter is now of extreme urgency.

Instruction of Teachers.—The following were the arrangements of the year for instruction of teachers : (1.) Week-end classes in preparation for the certificate were held, as in previous years, at Wellington, Masterton, and Pahiatua. (2.) Marlborough: No Saturday classes were held, but the correspondence course covering the "D" programme was continued, and at the end of the year the usual summer school was held in Blenheim, extending over a period of three weeks. Thirty teachers attended this course. (3.) A spring course in elementary agriculture, extending over a fortnight and held at Masterton District High School in September, was attended by forty-six teachers. Of these, a number attended in order to meet the requirements of the certificate in this subject; others, for general improvement in agriculture as a school subject. The course was characterized by an earnest spirit of work. Mr. Cockayne, of the Agricultural Department, rendered valued assistance in both lecture and field work.

Training College.—A full statement of the work of the year will be found in the report of the Principal. The following is a brief statement of the statistics of the institution: The total number of students was 120—14 men and 106 women. Six of the men obtained leave of absence in order to enlist. There were sixty-four first-year students and fifty-six second-year students classified thus—Division A, 114; B, 5; C, 0; D, 1. They came from: Wellington, 45; Wanganui, 25; Hawke's Bay, 16; Nelson, 15; Taranaki, 9; Westland, 3; Grey, 3; Canterbury, 2; Southland, 2.