

## NELSON.

SIR,—

Nelson, 6th July, 1919.

I have the honour to furnish a report of the proceedings of the Nelson Education Board for the year 1918.

*The Board.*—The members of the Board are Messrs. W. Lock and E. E. Boyes, representing the Nelson Urban Area; Messrs. F. W. O. Smith and E. J. Scantlebury, representing the East Ward of the Rural Area; Messrs. W. C. Baigent and T. Symes, representing the North Ward of the Rural Area; and Messrs. D. J. Williams and A. C. Cottrell, representing the West Ward of the Rural Area. At the annual meeting in August Mr. F. W. O. Smith was elected Chairman. Mr. G. H. Gothard, the former Chairman, did not seek re-election as member owing to ill health, and his enforced retirement was much regretted by the Board. The Chairman (Mr. Smith) continues to represent the Board on the Board of Governors of Nelson College and on the Council of Victoria University College. Eleven meetings were held during the year, the November meeting being abandoned on account of the influenza epidemic and consequent difficulty of travelling.

*Primary Schools.*—There were 137 schools in operation at the end of the year, the number including nine side schools. Twelve schools were opened or reopened during the year and three schools closed. Thus nine schools were added to the list for the year, the majority of them, however, being Grade 0 or Grade I schools.

*District High Schools.*—[See E.—6, Report on Secondary Education.]

*Scholarships.*—The number of National Scholarships held at the end of the year was twenty-one. The majority of the holders of scholarships attend at the Nelson Colleges. Two war bursaries were awarded during the year.

*Attendance.*—The total number of children on the roll of the public schools at the end of the year was 7,146, and the average attendance for the year was 6,258, an increase of thirty-nine for the year, and the highest average attendance yet recorded for the district. The attendances for the December quarter were adversely affected by the disastrous influenza epidemic, but the Department's action in allowing the quarter to be disregarded in the computation of the yearly average attendance was appreciated.

*Buildings.*—I am glad to report that a very marked improvement in the condition of our school buildings generally has been accomplished, mainly through the efforts of the Building Supervisor and the carrying-out of repair-work, renewals, &c., direct by the Board. Each portion of the district has been taken in turn, and the employment of reliable tradesmen under expert supervision has given great satisfaction. In common with other advances in price the cost of buildings, &c., is a heavy item, and it is respectfully submitted that the basis of the allowances for maintenance and rebuildings cannot include provision for the expenditure required nowadays. Though a debit balance is shown on the Maintenance of Buildings Account it is necessary to state that some £350 of materials were on hand and paid for before the end of the year. The following works were carried out during the year: Additions to schools at Richmond, Ranzau, Karamea, and Tahuna; the removal of Brighton School to Punakaiki; new schools at Korere, Gowan Valley, Mapua, and Inangahua Landing; a manual-training school at Takaka; and additions to the Technical School, Nelson. Substantial improvements have also been effected to a large number of schools and residences.

*Manual and Technical.*—The reports of the Directors of the Technical Schools at Nelson and Westport afford a good indication of the progress made at these schools. At Nelson additional accommodation was provided for the engineering classes, now an important branch of the school's activities. Equipment is urgently required for the workshops, and the school still remains in urgent need of painting and renovation, a grant for which was applied for early last year. It is unfortunate, too, that the school-site is much too small, and steps will have to be taken sooner or later to secure buildings and surroundings more in keeping with the needs of the institution. The Westport School continues to carry on very good work. The great feature of this school is the splendidly directed and equipped engineering department. Technical classes are also conducted at Reefton. Boards of Managers will be set up this year for both the Nelson and Westport Schools.

Manual-training classes are carried on in the principal schools, and the agricultural instructor conducts special classes in addition to his visits to primary schools. The cost of carrying on the various branches of manual-training and handwork instruction is increasing to such an extent that unless substantial assistance is forthcoming, either in increased capitation rates or in providing the salaries and expenses of instructors and cost of materials, it will be incumbent on the Board to retrench.

*Finance.*—Owing principally to the increased expenditure on manual and technical instruction the accounts disclose a debit balance at the end of the year. Grants, required in respect of several items of buildings, equipment, &c., are being applied for, and every effort is being made to place all special and general accounts on a proper footing; and in this connection I hope to report a much improved position at the end of this year.

I have, &amp;c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

F. W. O. SMITH, Chairman.