

during the year. One school was reopened and two half-time schools were disestablished, and a full-time school opened to serve the combined districts. A commencement was made with the scheme to establish four mixed schools in Nelson City, where, until the beginning of the year, there were two main separate boys' and girls' schools with two mixed side schools attached to each.

*Attendance.*—The total roll at the end of the year was 7,172, being an increase of thirty-nine over that at the end of 1922. The average attendance was 6,392, as against 6,554 for the previous year, a decrease of 162. The decreased average attendance last year was accounted for by the prevalence of influenza throughout the district. In connection with irregular attendance it was necessary to take legal proceedings against eighty-six individuals, seventy-seven convictions being recorded.

*District High Schools.*—The number on the roll of secondary departments at the end of the year was 100, as against eighty-one, an increase of nineteen.

*Teaching Staff.*—The number of adult teachers in the service of the Board at the end of the year, excluding nineteen relieving teachers, was 227. Of these, 165 were certificated or had licenses to teach, and sixty-two were uncertificated. The practice of terminating the engagements of all uncertificated teachers, unless of exceptional merit, at the end of each year has had very beneficial results, and the uncertificated teachers in the service show a decrease of twenty-six as at the end of 1922. Of the uncertificated teachers twenty-five were in charge of Grade 0 schools, twenty in charge of Grade 1 schools, one in a Grade 2 school, and sixteen were assistants. Excluding the Grade 0 schools, of the number of adult teachers in the service of the Board at the end of the year 81 per cent. were certificated. The Board had the services of three organizing teachers throughout the year. These teachers did excellent work in assisting inexperienced teachers in charge of small schools in the outlying districts.

*Conveyance and Boarding Allowances.*—Conveyance allowance was paid on account of 151 children attending thirty schools, and boarding-allowance to forty-four children in attendance at nineteen schools. The total expenditure in respect of these allowances was £1,037 16s. 1d.

*Voluntary Contributions.*—The Board is pleased to record that sixty School Committees claimed subsidy, and that the sum received during the year by way of voluntary contributions in cash towards improvement of school-grounds, purchase of sites, books for school libraries, &c., was £1,072 13s., an increase of more than £600 over the amount raised during the previous year. In addition a great deal of work in connection with levelling and otherwise improving the school-grounds was carried out by various Committees free of cost. The thanks of the Board are due to all who assisted in this direction.

*Buildings.*—Four new schools were completed, and in several other cases buildings were added to or remodelled.

*Health of Children.*—Before the end of the year clinics were in operation at Nelson, Motueka, Murchison, and Westport, the dentists and nurses also visiting a number of the country schools. The scheme has so far not been extended to the more remote portion of the district, and, while realizing the big task involved, the Board hopes that the time is not far distant when this great boon will be within the reach of all children.

*Physical Instruction.*—Two instructors were sent over from Wellington, and during the short period they were here did excellent work. The Board feels that the appointment of a permanent instructor who could give his whole time to the district is warranted.

*Correspondence Instruction for Country Children.*—Applications continue to be received for enrolment in the Department's correspondence school, and the scheme is no doubt proving beneficial to many children in the backblock districts.

*Manual Instruction.*—Manual-training classes were conducted at seven centres. Classes in agriculture were conducted at eighty-nine schools, and instruction given to 1,319 pupils; the district and the number of schools is too large to enable one instructor to get satisfactory results. Swimming and life-saving classes have been carried on in a number of schools despite the lack of suitable baths, and a large number of children taught to swim. Instruction in handwork was given in every school. The material was received from the Department at an earlier date than that for the previous year, with the result that the Board was able to make a distribution to schools shortly after the commencement of the New Year. The Department's practice of curtailing the requisitions sent in has caused dissatisfaction in regard to certain of the lines supplied, but on the whole the method is proving satisfactory. Special teachers to give instruction in needlework were employed at twenty-three schools which were in sole charge of male teachers.

*Technical Instruction.*—The Technical School at Nelson and the Technical High School at Westport are now under the control of their respective Boards of Managers. Outside of these centres, classes in cookery, dressmaking, millinery, cabinetmaking, and woodwork were conducted at Motueka and Takaka. In the past these classes were conducted for six-monthly periods alternately at each centre, but arrangements have now been made for them to be run continuously throughout the year, with the result that greater interest is being shown and the roll numbers increasing.

*Teachers' Classes.*—Saturday instruction classes in elementary science, agriculture, drawing, and handwork were held at Nelson and Westport, and as far as possible all uncertificated teachers, pupil-teachers, and probationers from outlying schools were required to attend.

*Finance.*—The Board's financial position shows an improvement over that at the end of 1922, but it has been necessary to practice economy in all directions. The credit cash balance over all accounts on the 31st December, 1923, was £4,509 18s. 6d. Difficulty is still experienced in keeping our expenditure on administration within the amount of the grant received; this is due to the very large percentage of small schools in the district.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

F. W. O. SMITH, Chairman.