

Physical Instruction.—Realizing that the new scheme of physical instruction is not the type of work that can be mastered merely by perusal of an official text-book, arrangements were made through the courtesy of the Auckland Education Board for Mr. K. C. Reid, Instructor at the Auckland Training College, to conduct intensive courses for teachers in this district, and thanks to the tact, skill, and enthusiasm of the Instructor, all gatherings were highly successful.

The closing of the schools, however, resulted in some comment from the Committees, and my Board hopes that you will be able to appoint qualified men and women to take charge of this important side of education.

School Committees.—Year by year the value of the service of School Committees in Taranaki is more and more manifest. The work of improvements in and around the schools is only one indication of the interest householders take in the welfare of the schools. In many cases this interest extends further. The schools are becoming centres of social and educational welfare activities. Some Committees are working in conjunction with the Red Cross Society and the Plunket Society, boy scouts, &c. Many are associated with sports clubs for tennis, basketball, football, and swimming; and in turn these clubs are assisting the Committees.

Several Committees have complained that the capitation allowances are inadequate for them to properly carry out their main functions.

My Board proposes to make a very thorough comparative search when the books are sent in for audit and will present to you a full report for your information.

WANGANUI.

(Chairman, Mr. E. F. HEMINGWAY.)

School Environment.—The passing of section 4 of the Education Amendment Act, 1934–35, which limited the Board's expenditure on school-grounds to 5 per cent. of the income in Maintenance of Buildings Account was a severe handicap, and, despite representations from all the Boards, the position is still unchanged. The unrestricted spending of money in Maintenance Account has been the prerogative of Boards for years past, and the Boards, with their knowledge of local conditions, are in the best position to judge all applications received from School Committees for assistance with ground-improvement works. To many Committees a subsidy or grant of a few pounds is the Board's practical recognition of their labours, and is a definite incentive to further progress. This Board can justly claim that any money spent on ground-improvement works has resulted in the creation of permanent assets for the schools concerned, and has not resulted in any undue restriction of expenditure on other works for which the Maintenance Account is mainly designed.

The local enthusiasm of teachers and Committees in creating and maintaining the present excellent standard of environment will undoubtedly receive a severe check if the Board is unable, through the legislative restriction now imposed, to give financial assistance, where it considers such to be warranted.

New environment certificates were issued to eleven schools, the certificates of eighty-one schools were endorsed, and letters of commendation were sent to Committees and teachers of eighteen schools.

Training of Teachers.—The further decrease in unemployment among teachers, and the decision of the Government to readmit the five-year-olds to school in 1936, made it necessary to provide for a larger supply of trainees than was the case last year. It is pleasing to report that the Government has found it possible to make the training-conditions more attractive by increasing the allowances payable. The temporary lowering of the entrance qualification to Higher Leaving Certificate standard resulted in the receipt of ninety-two applications for admission to college, and the Board was thus able to fill its quota of sixty-one students. Of this number, thirty-five were females and twenty-six males, the latter number representing a gratifying increase over the number admitted in the previous year—namely, 5.

School Committees.—The members of the various School Committees have again completed a most satisfactory year's work—for the most part under trying financial conditions. It speaks volumes for the enthusiasm of the citizens—who so ungrudgingly give their services to this work—that the school equipment, buildings, and grounds of the district are maintained at their present high standard, despite the handicap of restricted grants. This happy result is undoubtedly due to the splendid spirit of co-operation and enthusiasm that has marked the work of Committees and teachers.

The Board looks forward to the easing of the Committees' financial responsibilities by the provision of additional grants for incidentals, and the restoration of subsidies on locally raised money.

Intermediate School.—Having watched the progress and development of the Wanganui Intermediate School for a period of three years, the Board is in a position to state that the school has fully justified its existence, and proved that the intermediate system is a definite advance in New Zealand educational methods. The growth of the system in other parts of the world leaves no doubt as to overseas opinion on the matter.

It is, therefore, disappointing to record that, when the Board wished to extend the benefits of the system to the Gonville district, there was decided opposition from the majority of householders. The Board realizes, of course, that the great majority of parents were not conversant with the system, and that the "verdict" was based more on loyalty to the local school than on any other consideration. The matter is, however, one which is, or should be, far above the considerations of local pride—it should be judged solely from the point of view of the effect on the child. In the opinion of the most prominent educationalists in New Zealand, there is no doubt that the intermediate system is a definite improvement on the present system. Every parent who denies his child the opportunity of attending an intermediate school is unconsciously penalizing him.