

Committees throughout the district have acknowledged the generous increase in the grants for their incidental allowances.

Subsidies on Voluntary Contributions.—Notwithstanding the fact that subsidies on voluntary contributions were withdrawn several years ago, Committees, parents, and teachers have not lessened their endeavours to raise local funds for school purposes.

The Board considers that the spirit of self-help evidenced by the very generous contributions made by local efforts should be fully encouraged.

In particular, the Board urges that subsidies be paid in aid of school libraries.

Conveyance and Boarding-allowances.—The Board wishes to record its appreciation of the concessions granted by the Government in restoring payment of boarding-allowance on account of primary-school children, and in authorizing payment of conveyance and boarding-allowances on account of children attending post-primary schools. It was hoped that at the same time the Government might have seen its way clear to review the conditions under which riding-allowance is paid to enable children to attend primary schools. In the Board's opinion all children residing outside regulation distance of a school should be placed on an equal footing, and the inability of a parent to provide a wheeled conveyance should not act as a bar to his receiving assistance towards the cost of transport of his children to school. It is not suggested that riding-allowance be granted indiscriminately so as to affect existing conveyance services, but it is considered that riding-allowance could quite reasonably be made available in cases where no means other than by horseback exist for the conveyance of children to school.

TARANAKI.

(Chairman, Mr. J. A. VALENTINE, B.A.)

Efficiency of Schools.—The Inspectors reports indicate a satisfactory standard of efficiency generally in all schools. Of 1,031 pupils who were in Form II and presented for the annual examination, 864 were declared proficient and 121 competent. A system of accrediting was adopted again this year; the results have been reported upon by the Inspector to your Department.

Agriculture and Boys' and Girls' Clubs.—Rural science has been carried out on the broad lines of previous years, with the aim of meeting the varying needs of the pupils and district. Some schools specialize in forestry, some in bee-keeping, some in dairy science. Boys' and girls' club work still continues to hold the interest of the farming community. An indication of how genuinely this branch of education appeals to farmers is to be seen in the large attendance at judging and exhibitions, and their zealous trouble taken to give practical help and advice. A general trend is for club work to become more and more the basis of the rural science of the school. Marked progress was made by the clubs formed and run by the children themselves, and wherever the principle learned in the science lesson is applied to the work on the plot or animal the results have been assessed as good. School environment throughout the district is attractive and orderly. Detailed plans for the proper lay-out of the grounds were sought by a number of committees, and as a rule no time was lost in starting the work suggested.

Conveyance of Pupils.—Payments were made for the conveyance of 644 pupils at ordinary rates presented by regulations, and 308 children conveyed under eighteen special contracts.

The Board has been asked by several School Committees to arrange for the closing of their schools and for the conveyance of the pupils to larger schools. The policy adopted by the Board in such cases is to inquire fully into the position, and to recommend that the Department should approve of consolidation proposals only when it is clear that educational advantages accrue to the children and that suitable and economical conveyance schemes can be arranged. As instances I would quote the proposals now before your Department to close the Mata and Rotokare schools and convey the children to Eltham.

My Board desires to express its warm appreciation of your action in extending conveyance privileges to pupils of secondary schools. In Taranaki these may be used in conjunction with our primary-school service.

Albert Road and Derby Road schools have been closed and the children conveyed to Norfolk and Mangorei Consolidated.

The increased running-costs of these services is causing some unrest among contractors, and this has been the subject of correspondence with your Department.

Health and Physical Education.—The course of instruction in primary schools did not suffer to any extent during the year through pronounced epidemics.

Colonel Dawson took over the duties of District Health Officer and School Medical Officer early in the year, and has worked in hearty co-operation with the Board, reporting regularly upon the condition of schools and school equipment.

Despite the fact that all teachers should now be quite competent to carry out courses of physical drill, my Board remembers that evolutionary changes have been taking place during the last decade, and wonders whether teachers have been able to keep pace with the changes. Formal drill for primary children, according to certain modern opinions, should be nothing but corrective exercises. My Board hopes you will be able to take whatever steps are necessary to assure the physical improvement of all school-children.