

## WANGANUI.

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

*School Committees.*—The biennial election of School Committees took place on 27th April. The Board was pleased to note that many of the "old stalwarts" were again returned to office. Some retirements after long service were brought to the Board's notice—namely, members with service of thirty-four, twenty-seven, and twenty-three years, respectively. It is not considered wise to here mention the names, as others with equal service might have retired without the Board's knowledge. In each case, however, the Board placed on record its sincere appreciation of the services they had rendered, and conveyed its thanks to them.

To all members of Committees the Board is deeply grateful for the work they have carried out. Many of the public regard a School Committee as an ineffective body without powers or duties. If such were the case the schools would be in a sorry state. One needs only to visit the schools to see and appreciate the wonderful work which is carried out by Committees, with the assistance and co-operation of householders and teachers. Not only is the "liveness" of the Committee reflected in the grounds and outside environment, but also in the interior equipment of the schools.

*Consolidation of Schools.*—One of the most pleasing features of the year's work has been the steady flow of applications from country districts for information regarding consolidation. Representatives of the Board have addressed numerous meetings, and the result has been most encouraging. At the end of the year there were four schemes actually in operation, four additional schemes had been approved to commence at the beginning of the new school-year, and five schemes had been approved by the parents but had not been fully investigated by the Board. There were also several requests on the files for visits from the Board.

In addition to the foregoing, six conveyance services were commenced during the year in lieu of establishing small schools, while an additional service had been approved to commence with the new school-year.

The operation of these schemes near at hand will not doubt enable many parents who are at present sceptical of the advantages to observe them first hand. The Board has found that, in a few cases, consolidation has been judged from the wrong aspect. Such considerations as the welfare or standing of the district, the value of farm lands, and the transfer of the teacher, should have no effect on the decision of the parents. The schools exist for the children, and they are entitled to the very best educational facilities which are available. Experience the world over has proved the system of consolidation to be definitely advantageous, and the Board would be lacking in the execution of its duties if it did not offer these advantages to the smaller schools of one or two teachers. All that the Board asks is that the parents, in judging the matter, consider only the paramount factor—the children's welfare.

*Intermediate School System.*—The Wanganui School continues to give excellent service. While there are only two official contributing schools, some children are admitted from practically every town school, while others travel many miles daily from country districts. It is evident, therefore, that many parents are realizing the advantages of the system and are not prepared to allow distance or local prejudices to prevent their children from obtaining the very best tuition possible.

During the year the Board investigated the possibility of establishing an intermediate school in Palmerston North, with a view to commencing the system at the beginning of 1937. At the request of the Department, however, the matter was deferred. The Board hopes that an intermediate school for the whole of the city schools will be in operation in 1938.

## HAWKE'S BAY.

(Chairman, Mr. G. A. MADDISON.)

*Grading and Staffing of Schools.*—At the beginning of the year, owing to the influx of five-year-olds, it was necessary to regrade the schools, and the Department adopted the basis of taking 95 per cent. of the roll number as at 1st April as the figure for grading and staffing purposes.

This resulted in quite a number of schools recovering the grades which they had lost owing to the raising of the school age. This involved numerous staff changes, but these were all effected by the beginning of the second term.

The elimination of the average attendance as the basis for grading and staffing was a very progressive move, and it was particularly gratifying that, although it was instituted at the beginning of the year merely on account of special circumstances, the Department has decided that 95 per cent. of the average roll for the period 7th September to 2nd October is to be taken as the basis for the grading and staffing of schools for 1937. This Board, along with other Boards and teachers' organizations, has long agitated for a less fluctuating basis for grading and staffing of schools than the average attendance, and the change made last year is therefore very pleasing to all concerned. The Board feels sure that there will be no reversion to the average-attendance basis.

*District High Schools.*—The secondary departments of these schools had a successful year, and have met reasonably the need for post-primary education in the smaller town centres. The schools were on the whole well supported in the country districts, and the keenness of many of the pupils is shown by the regularity of their attendance, more especially owing to the fact that they have long distances to travel to pursue their post-primary education. The Inspectors' reports on the work of the secondary departments show that on the whole the work is of a satisfactory standard.