

*Agricultural Instruction.*—Schools are making good progress with plans for Centennial tree-planting, which the Board is commending as the most suitable form of commemoration for nearly all school environs. The propagation of suitable species by cutting and from seed, and the gathering of seedlings from native bush for lining out in nursery rows, is well advanced. The Board has suggested that the plan of improvements beginning in 1939 should cover a period of some years, a definite specified portion to be carried out annually. A living memorial of this nature will foster in our children, through their daily contact with it, a love of the natural beauties of our land and an appreciation of the living countryside; at the same time it should make a strong appeal to the whole community associated with the initiation and carrying-on of the project.

Interest in the agricultural-club movement continues to increase, the number of completed projects in the crop-growing competition totalling 422. Entries received for the crop, live-stock, forestry, and horticultural projects for 1938–39 number 1,175.

The school-gardens exhibit continues to be a feature of the Dunedin Winter Show, and furnishes the public with visual evidence of the practical nature of the work carried out at the schools.

*School Libraries.*—Lending Library Service: The lending-library service for country schools, in which the Dunedin Public Library and the Board are co-operating, has now been in operation one year. The scheme was tried out in sixteen schools, and its practicability having been demonstrated it has been extended to a further eighty-two schools. All schools willing to pay the initial contribution of 2s. per pupil and 1s. 6d. per year thereafter may join the service, which, in the meantime, is for the pupils of Standard IV, Forms I and II, and secondary classes and departments. The Board pays the Dunedin Public Library an initial contribution of 10s. per pupil for the purchase of the central stock and the servicing of the scheme. Wooden boxes were used at first for the transport of the books, but wicker baskets have now been adopted because of their lightness and resistance to wear-and-tear. Books are exchanged both between neighbouring schools and the central depot at the Dunedin Public Library. Exchanges are not made at set intervals, but whenever convenient to the schools concerned. Including city and suburban schools, 117 schools are now connected with the lending-library Service.

*Reference Libraries:* Reference libraries for pupils have now been established in one hundred schools under the Board's special subsidy proposals, which provide for an initial subsidy ranging from £3 up to £10 according to size of school. Lists of reference books have been compiled by a Selection Committee representative of the Board, the Inspectors, and the Teachers, together with the Children's Librarian of the City Library. The initial lists contain some four hundred and fifty titles classified under the headings English, Arts and Crafts, History, geography, nature-study and science, and miscellaneous, and these will be added to periodically as new publications come out. There is a separate list for secondary departments containing some five hundred titles.

With the aid of the Department's special grant, the stocks of supplementary readers in all schools were replenished.

During the spring vacation the Children's Librarian conducted a short course in school-library work, which was well attended by both town and country teachers.

*Refresher Courses.*—Refresher courses for country teachers were conducted at Oamaru and Balclutha, while Dunedin teachers were provided with the opportunity of attending an extended course in choral verse-speaking.

*Consolidation and Conveyance.*—The Board is of opinion that, in general, consolidation is not practicable or desirable in any case where it would result in children being on the bus for more than one hour. This would mean that in a round trip the maximum distance should not exceed from twenty-eight to thirty-two miles, a factor in deciding being the distance from the starting-point of the first pupils picked up. The Board's experience is that a school bus takes one hour to cover from eighteen to twenty-five miles according to the nature of the roads and the number of stops.

One result of the Clutha Valley consolidation, which at the beginning of the new year will result in the closing of eight country schools, is that the Board has decided to investigate the feasibility of other rural consolidations where consolidation on an existing centre would not be practicable or possibly not meet with the approval of the parents. In some districts there is a feeling that consolidation on a centre results in loss of identity, while there is little possibility of representation on the central School Committee. Where a number of country schools combine in a consolidation in their midst, local interest and control are preserved. The constitution of a committee for a consolidated school requires consideration.

New consolidations effected in 1938 were Airedale on Teaneraki, Maungatua and West Taieri on Outram, Lowburn on Cromwell, Lower Harbour on Port Chalmers and Purakanui, and Otiake on Kurow.

Consolidation in Otago has now resulted in the closing of thirty schools.

At the end of the year the number of children conveyed to school or boarded from home was as follows: Conveyed by parents, &c., 364 (decrease 51); conveyed by contract, 1,120 (increase 153); receiving horseback allowance, 8 (decrease 1); receiving boarding allowance (primary), 60 (increase 12); receiving boarding allowance (post-primary), 26 (increase 9).

The total cost of the above services was £13,228 2s. 3d., an increase of £3,457 18s. 4d. The Board contributed £214 15s. 2d. from its General Fund.

*Visual Education.*—About sixty schools in this district have agreed to contribute towards the cost of a film-strip projector, and the Board has agreed to find the balance of the cost and to establish a library of some fifteen hundred films. Visual education by means of the film-strip projector can be brought within the reach of every school, as against the limited number of larger schools which would be in a position to purchase a moving-picture projector. The Board favours a type of projector which,