

## WESTLAND EDUCATION DISTRICT

By "The Westland Education District Subdivision Act, 1883," it was provided that the Board of the Education District of Westland should be dissolved, and that on and after the 1st January, 1884, the district should be divided into two education districts,—the one comprising the County of Grey and the Borough of Greymouth, the other comprising the County of Westland and the Boroughs of Hokitika, Kumara, and Ross. In consequence of there having been no election of members of the Education Boards of the contemplated new districts of Grey and Westland as required by the Act of 1883, and the Board constituted by the Act of 1877 having ceased to act, there has been, since the 1st January, 1884, no duly-constituted authority for the management of the public schools of the district in question, and it became indispensable, in the interest of the district, that the Government should undertake the maintenance of the schools until the General Assembly should make legal provision for the administration of educational affairs. A circular letter, of which a copy is appended,\* was issued on the 16th January, 1884, to the several School Committees concerned, intimating that the Government had resolved to pay the teachers' salaries and any other current expenditure that might be found absolutely necessary, until the General Assembly should have removed existing difficulties; and that officers of the Government at Greymouth and Hokitika respectively would be appointed forthwith to distribute the necessary payments on account of the public schools.

The services of the Board's Secretary and Inspector of Schools were retained, and an officer of the department was despatched to the district to make all needful arrangements for carrying on the schools. When the circular of the 16th January was written it was in the very natural belief that the Board had been keeping its ordinary current expenditure within its current income, but an investigation of its accounts revealed the fact that the scale of ordinary current expenditure at the close of 1883 exceeded the rate of the Board's legitimate income by a very considerable amount. As the Government had no funds at its disposal to enable it to expend more upon the schools of the district than the amount voted by the General Assembly for that purpose, it became absolutely necessary to equalize the income and expenditure. After very full consideration it was decided by the Government that no reduction should be made in the ordinary salaries of the teachers and pupil-teachers, and that the indispensably necessary reductions should be effected by paying only one-half of the sums that the Board had undertaken to pay on account of School Committees' grants and teachers' and pupil teachers' bonuses. A circular to this effect was sent to the several School Committees on the 12th February, 1884.†

It was also ascertained that, although the capitation allowances for November, 1883, had been paid as usual to the credit of the Board's account at its bank, yet the teachers' salaries and other liabilities for that month were unpaid when the Board ceased to hold office. The payments due to the teachers and others for December were made directly to them by the department out of the capitation allowance for that month. But as there are no funds available to meet the November payments for salaries, &c., they still remain unpaid.

When its accounts for the year 1883 were made up it was ascertained that the Board had involved itself in liabilities very far in excess of its income, and that before leaving office it had caused cheques to be drawn by way of payment of its liabilities to the amount of £4,767 2s. 11d. beyond the means at its disposal, while at the same time there was owing to the bank a sum of £805 3s. 7d. for interest and overdraft. The indebtedness of the late Education Board when it left office thus amounted to £5,572 6s. 6d. The Board's assets at the same date may be set down as follows: Share of special vote for school buildings for 1883-84, £1,824; and estimated value of school-books and school appliances in stock, £1,816 total, £3,640. The latter sum can scarcely be regarded as available for general purposes, because any money arising from the

\* Appendix, page 109.

† Appendix, page 110.