

excellent land is available, are denied them here. The number of applications brought before the Westland Land Board by no means represents the whole loss sustained by the district through this most injurious reservation. Probably a much larger number of persons left the district without putting themselves to the trouble of making applications at all, knowing that they could not be entertained.

RETRENCHMENT.—The general retrenchment effected by Parliament, and referred to in this Board's last report, has necessitated a corresponding reduction in its expenditure. Hoping, however, that in fulfilment of the promise made in Parliament by the Ministers some consideration would be given to such districts as Westland, the Board delayed making any change in its financial arrangements for a time, and a still further delay was thought advisable when there seemed some probability that the session of 1888 might result in the raising of the school age, and a consequent further diminution of the Board's income. In the month of May, however, a sub-committee was appointed to go into the whole question of retrenchment, and after long and careful consideration the committee's report was received and adopted by the Board on the 28th June. The amount by which it was thought necessary to curtail expenses was about £800, which, though a small sum as compared with the amount of retrenchments in other districts, is relatively large, being a reduction of about 13 per cent. upon the expenditure for ordinary purposes during the year. The following are the principal items of retrenchment ultimately adopted by the Board: (1) A reduction of the Board's contribution to the Committees' school funds; (2) the abolition of all bonuses to teachers and pupil-teachers; (3) the compulsory retirement of pupil-teachers who had served their full time; (4) the payment of teachers and the allotment of staffs upon the basis of the strict instead of the working average; (5) a reduction of 5 per cent. on teachers' salaries of £140 and upwards, and 2½ per cent. on those between £60 and £140; (6) the conversion of two schools at Kokatahi into half-time schools, and a reduction of the staff of the Donoghue's School, situated within three miles of Ross; (7) the suspension of payments for cleaning and fuel to small schools; (8) reduction in the rate of payment to pupil-teachers; and (9) a reduction in the payment for the instruction of pupil-teachers, made by adopting the Otago scale. The Board is fairly entitled to some credit for the previous economical administration of its funds, owing to which it was enabled to postpone these reductions to so late a period of the year, and even then to give three months' notice to all teachers before bringing the new scale of payments into force. The Board is desirous of acknowledging the willing acquiescence of the majority of the Committees, and of all the teachers, in its endeavours to bring its expenditure within the probable limits of its income.

The attention of the Board is annually directed by the department to the number of uncertificated teachers in its employ. While fully recognising the importance of giving every advantage to such teachers as have qualified themselves for employment under the Act, the Board can see no way out of the difficulty under the peculiar circumstances of the district. The number of uncertificated teachers at present employed by the Board is twelve, whose salaries on the reduced scale average less than £65 per annum. Of these, two are female assistant teachers with salaries of £74 and £65 respectively. The highest salary paid to any uncertificated teacher in the district is below £100. As far as the Board is aware, there are no certificated teachers resident in the district who are out of employment, and it is highly improbable that certificated teachers could be induced to come here for the low rate of pay which the Board is compelled to adopt; and the expenses of advertising such vacancies in other parts of the colony would be a mere waste of the already insufficient funds at its disposal.

BUILDINGS.—The building operations in this district have been on a very limited scale during the past year, the Board having purposely refrained from much desirable expenditure until the future action of the Legislature shall have placed beyond doubt the question of further reduction in the education estimates. Should any such reduction be unfortunately decided upon, it will be impossible to reduce the expenditure in the district, excepting by the amalgamation of adjacent school districts and the concentration of scholars at central positions. To effect this a large expenditure upon the removal and re-erection of school buildings would be absolutely necessary; and the Board has therefore, during the past year, carefully husbanded its Building Fund by abstaining from otherwise necessary works until it shall be seen whether or not the extreme measure alluded to will be forced upon it. The only new buildings that have been erected during the year are an addition to the Lower Kokatahi School and a teacher's cottage at Blue Spur. Teachers' residences are required at Goldsborough, Kanieri, Humphrey's, and Donoghue's; and the schoolgrounds at Upper and Lower Kokatahi have never yet been fenced in, a work most necessary to protect the building from injury by wandering cattle, &c.

The amount charged against the Hokitika School under the head of "Plans, specifications, &c.," is the sum due to the architect at the date of last report, and which appeared in Return No. 6 under the liabilities of the Board at that date. This explains the relatively large amount charged under the head of supervision, &c.

The several returns connected with this and the Inspector's report, which is forwarded herewith, will be found to furnish all other information required by the department.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

GERHARD MUELLER, Chairman.