

Subenclosure.

SIR,—

17th June, 1898.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th September, 1897, and in compliance therewith to present to you an account of the educational system of the colony. This statement has been prepared in the office of the department, under the eye of the Secretary, and has been somewhat delayed through the illness of that officer.

I have, &c.,

W. C. WALKER,
Minister of Education.

Sir G. W. Kekewich,
Education Department, Whitehall, London, S.W.

FROM 1853 to the end of 1876 New Zealand was divided into provinces, under separate Governments. Between 1855 and 1857 some system of public primary instruction was established in each of the principal provinces. In all these systems the primary schools were administered by local Committees, and by a central Board or other authority at the provincial capital. The expenses were variously paid out of capitation charges on householders and on children, out of rates on property, out of fees and donations, and out of grants from the provincial treasuries. Religious instruction was provided.

After the abolition of provinces in 1876 the existing provincial systems of education remained in operation until the present system came into force, at the beginning of 1878. This differs from most of its provincial predecessors in being at once free, compulsory, and secular; but it still bears traces of its provincial origin, notably in the retention of a provincial administration by Boards, as well as the central administration by the Education Department.

Under "The Education Act, 1877" (a copy of which is attached), the colony is divided, for purposes of primary education, into thirteen education districts, generally coextensive with the old provinces, or with subdivisions of them. The education districts are subdivided into a large and increasing number of school districts, in each of which there is a School Committee of five to nine persons, elected annually by the householders. In each education district there is an Education Board of nine members, elected three every year for terms of three years by the School Committees. Subject to general supervision and control by the Board, and to inspection by the Board's Inspector, the Committee has the management of school business within the school district. The Board appoints and removes teachers, but only after consulting the Committee. The Board also appoints Inspectors.

There is a Department of Education, presided over by a Minister of Education. The regulations for the inspection of schools and for the issue of certificates to teachers are made by the Governor in Council. The Education Department distributes to the Education Boards the grants voted by Parliament for the maintenance of the primary schools, and for school-buildings.

The schools are maintained by a statutory payment out of the consolidated revenue of the colony at the rate of £3 15s. a year for each unit of the average daily attendance of pupils. No fees are chargeable for primary instruction at the public schools. A further capitation of 1s. 6d. on the average daily attendance is voted annually by Parliament for the maintenance of scholarships tenable at secondary schools by children leaving the primary schools. Besides these capitations Parliament votes also a yearly sum of £4,000 towards the cost of inspection of schools by Boards, a subsidy of £300 a year each to the two normal schools, and a variable sum for expenditure on school-buildings. In 1878, 1879, and 1880 respectively this last vote was £101,257, £150,581, and £104,437; since that time it has once exceeded £83,000, and once fallen below £12,000. The capitation voted by Parliament is paid to the several Boards, and forms the fund out of which each Board maintains its schools, pays the salaries of its teachers and other officers, and defrays the greater part of the cost of inspection. The Boards also make small grants to the Committees for fuel, cleaning, and incidental expenses, and for school libraries. The fund at the disposal of a Committee may be supplemented by donations and subscriptions, and by fines recovered for truancy.

Neither members of Education Boards nor members of School Committees receive any remuneration for their services.

Certificates of competency are issued to teachers after examination held by the Education Department, or on proof of having passed equivalent examination conducted by some efficient public authority. There are five classes of teachers' certificates, of which Class E (the lowest) indicates the possession of a sound English education, such as is given in the public schools of the colony, while Class A (the highest) is reserved for university graduates in first-class or second-class honours. But in each class there are five divisions, depending on efficiency, and, in a less degree, on seniority, and a teacher's rank depends equally on the class and on his division, so that, for example, the certificates of A5, B4, C3, D2, and E1 are all of equal rank.

The first annual list of certificated teachers under "The Education Act, 1877," was gazetted on the 2nd July, 1879, and contained the names of 749 teachers employed in public instruction. The nineteenth list was gazetted on the 28th June, 1897, and contained the names of 2,353 teachers so employed. The following tables show the improvement that has been effected since 1879 in the general average of both literary attainment and practical efficiency of the primary-school staff of the colony under the present system of classification of teachers. [The regulations concerning teachers' certificates are at pages 84 to 90 of the accompanying pamphlet]:—

PROPORTIONAL NUMBERS OF TEACHERS HOLDING CERTIFICATES OF EACH CLASS AT JULY, 1879, AND AT JUNE, 1897, EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CERTIFICATED TEACHERS EMPLOYED.

					A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
1879	...	...	...	...	0·00	3·33	5·74	27·77	65·15
1897	...	...	...	...	1·15	4·55	6·51	47·19	40·60