

1942.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1941.

[In continuation of E.—1, 1941.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Office of the Department of Education,

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Wellington, 25th July, 1942.

I have the honour, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1914, to submit to Your Excellency the following report upon the progress and condition of public education in New Zealand during the year ended the 31st December, 1941.

His Excellency the Governor-General of the
Dominion of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

H. G. R. MASON.

REPORT.

Education and the War.—In the growing stress of war the Government has held fast to its faith that education is a social necessity and no mere luxury that can be readily abandoned when the nation turns its thoughts to sterner things. Like all civilian services, of course, the education system has had to make its sacrifices to the war effort: teachers by the hundred have entered the armed Services, the building programme has been slowed up, and many school buildings have been temporarily commandeered for military purposes. New Zealand had to make sacrifices if it was to ensure its very existence as a nation, but the Government is determined that, with the bare demands of national existence met, education must be one of the last of the services to be cut, if our children are to have a chance to build a better world than our generation has known.

Expenditure.—An analysis of the expenditure on education for the year ended 31st March, 1942, shows that, as far as money could achieve it, the Government has, in spite of the war, maintained the high standard of educational services which it set itself on taking office. The total expenditure was £5,268,994, which was £132,129 less than in the previous year.

Buildings.—Most of the difference was due to decreased expenditure on school buildings, on which £486,536 was spent, as against £580,470 for 1940-41. A growing shortage of labour and materials made it increasingly difficult to have building done at all, although some fine schools were completed during the year, notably Onehunga Intermediate, Pasadena Intermediate, Westport South, and Whangarei Girls' High. Major buildings under construction at the end of the year included: Tapawera Consolidated, Westport North, Lyttelton Main, Invercargill East Intermediate, Whangarei Girls' Hostel, Caversham Boys' Home, and buildings at Nelson College.

Conveyance.—The need for economizing petrol and vehicles made it impossible to continue the policy of consolidation except in a few minor cases, but the Government placed school conveyance services high on its urgency list, and, even when the petrol situation was at its worst, it made no serious cuts in the excellent system of conveyance that it has built up for the country child. It did, however, redouble its efforts to prevent unnecessary running. The expenditure on school conveyance (other than by rail) was £257,000, as against £260,000 in the previous year.

Staffing of Schools.—Large numbers of teachers had entered the armed forces under the voluntary system, and as employing Boards made very few appeals on behalf of teachers called up for military service, there was a definite shortage of teachers during the latter part of 1941. By one means or another the situation was fairly adequately met, but there is every indication that for the second half of 1942 the position will be extremely serious, and much more drastic steps will have to be taken if the education of some children is not to be seriously interfered with. In particular it will be necessary to take power to distribute the available teaching strength to the best advantage.

Biennial Grading.—As the year progressed, the mere maintenance of existing standards in all departments of the education system began to demand an ever-increasing amount of effort and thought, and it would be idle to pretend that 1941 was a year of startling advances. Yet, in the face of great difficulty, some advances of a by no means negligible character were achieved. Not the least of these resulted from the introduction of a system of biennial grading of primary-school teachers to replace the old annual grading. A proportion of the teachers felt some mistrust