

1909.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SPECIAL SCHOOLS, AND INFANT LIFE PROTECTION.

[In continuation of E.-3 and E.-4, 1908.]

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

EXTRACT FROM THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS : AFFLICTED AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN.

The Education Act requires that deaf, blind, feeble-minded, and epileptic children between the ages of seven and sixteen years shall be under efficient and suitable instruction. The institutions in New Zealand that exist for the purpose of educating children so afflicted are the School for the Deaf at Sumner, the Special School for mentally backward boys at Otekaike, North Otago—both of which are maintained by the Government—and the Jubilee Institute for the Blind at Auckland, which is administered by a Board of nine Trustees, four of whom are nominated by the Government, and five by the subscribers to the funds of the Institute. The Trustees are required by law to admit children of the compulsory school age who are nominated by the Minister of Education, payment from Government funds being at the rate of £25 per annum for each child. The Government also pays for the tuition of certain adults at the rate of £15 for the first year and £10 for the second, but in these cases makes no allowance for their maintenance.

At the end of the year the total number under training in these three institutions was 119, and the net sum expended out of Government funds during the year in connection with them was £18,194 7s. 3d.; but of this amount £12,560 12s. 2d. represents non-recurring expenditure, £9,401 16s. being accounted for in the purchase of land, buildings, equipment, and other inaugural expenses in connection with the Special School for Boys at Otekaike; also a grant of £3,000 was made towards new buildings for the Jubilee Institute for the Blind; and to complete the contract for laying out the grounds of the School for the Deaf at Sumner a sum of £158 16s. 2d. was paid.

It is a matter for satisfaction that the training given in these three schools follows closely the lines upon which the most modern systems in European and American schools are being developed.

A question for serious consideration is whether it would not be advisable to extend the period of instruction for these afflicted young people, making it begin at six years and continue to twenty-one years, unless satisfactory evidence were forthcoming either that the pupil was physically or mentally unfit to pursue the course of instruction, or that he had reached such a standard of efficiency in some art, handicraft, or calling as to enable him to maintain himself without further assistance.