

WANGANUI.

Education Office, Wanganui, 31st March, 1910.

BOARD.—At the beginning of the year the members of the Board were: Messrs. Fred. Pirani (Chairman), A. Fraser, and G. H. Bennett (Southern Ward); D. H. Guthrie, F. M. Spurdle, and F. Purnell (Middle Ward); and W. C. Cargill, J. P. Aldridge, and E. Dixon (Northern Ward). The retiring members were Messrs. G. H. Bennett, F. Purnell, and E. Dixon, and at the election in July the two first named were re-elected unopposed, and Mr. E. Dixon was re-elected for the Northern Ward. Mr. F. Pirani was re-elected Chairman. Towards the end of the year Mr. W. C. Cargill resigned his seat prior to his departure from the district. Mr. P. O'Dea, M.A., LL.B., who was elected to fill the vacancy, took his seat at the December meeting. The Board held fourteen ordinary and two special meetings. The average number of members in attendance was seven. The following were appointed to represent the Board on various public bodies: School Commissioners, F. Y. Lethbridge, Esq.; Palmerston North High School Board of Governors, T. R. Hodder, Esq.

SCHOOLS.—At the close of the year 193 main schools and three side schools were open. During the year schools were opened at Te Awa, Mangara, Makaka, Rongoiti, and Ngaturi, and a side school at Taikorea. Pukekaha was reopened, and the side schools at Valley Road, Gonville, and Makowhai were made separate schools. In regard to the last named, although the Board has purchased a site, the Department declines to make a grant for a building. The schools at Orangiopongo and The Lakes were not reopened, and Toi Toi and Maungahoe were closed during the year. There were under the Board's supervision nine Roman Catholic schools, concerning which information is given by the Inspectors in their report.

ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the year the roll-number stood at 13,849, and the average attendance for the last quarter of the year was 12,314. Compared with the previous year, there was an increase in the average weekly roll-number of 399, and in the average attendance of 475. The average attendance for the year expressed as a percentage of the mean of the average weekly roll for the year was 86.7, which is 1.9 in excess of the average for 1908. There was comparatively little sickness amongst the scholars during the year. With respect to attendance, the Wanganui Education District, with the Taranaki and Nelson, occupies the unenviable position of having the lowest average attendance for the Dominion, the highest attendance being 89.2, which was the number registered in Otago. It is clear that some of the parents of the district are not doing all that might be expected of them in the matter of their children's education, and there is no reason to go back on the Board's oft-repeated declaration that the sooner the statutory "off" days are abolished the better. That the attendance is as high as it is must be set down to the credit of the Board's officer, Mr. Easther, who now retires on superannuation after discharging his onerous duties well and faithfully for thirteen years. Owing to the Department's restriction of the Board's finances, it is not likely that a successor will be appointed.

TEACHERS.—At the close of the year there were, including six relieving-teachers, 433 teachers in the Board's service, of whom 184 were men and 249 women. In respect of qualification, 239 of the head, sole, and assistant teachers were certificated or held licenses, and 110 were uncertificated. As a number of teachers from the training college entered the Board's service at the beginning of 1910, and as more will do so from time to time, it is hoped that the ratio of uncertificated to certificated teachers will diminish, although the increased staffing and the additional pupils make that rather problematical. The Board notes with satisfaction that a large number of teachers successfully sat for higher certificates at the January, 1910, examinations. Nine of our pupil-teachers went to the training college, and at the end of the year the district received seven from that institution. Unfortunately for our district, there is a tendency on the part of the male students not to return upon the expiration of their college course, but to stay in or near Wellington for the purpose of continuing their University studies. At present it is especially difficult to get certificated teachers for remote schools.

It seems a pity that the scale of pay given to first secondary assistants is so low, and that it is based on the average attendance of a previous year. In the case of an inferior teacher leaving when the attendance is low, and a better teacher taking his place, it is very hard for the latter to have to put in a year's work with nearly double the number of pupils, at a salary much below what his predecessor was paid. This is especially hard considering that the headmaster of the school receives his full allowance (£30) no matter what the attendance is, although his share of the work (which is usually the case) may be infinitesimal. It has long been felt that it is ridiculous to pay an assistant in charge of secondary classes up to seventy pupils no more than is paid to a teacher in charge at a thirty-six primary school (minus house allowance), and if there is any desire to make district high schools efficient the scale of payment will have to be revised. The Board has endeavoured to equalize matters for years past by dividing the fees from paying pupils amongst the secondary assistants, but the Department now contends this is illegal.

It may not be out of place here to pay a high tribute to the value of the instruction obtained at the Wellington Teachers' Training College, although it is a matter of regret that several teachers will not be able to obtain admission there this year owing to lack of accommodation. The qualifications of the teachers of this district may be set out thus: A1, 2; A2, 3; B1, 4; B2, 3; B3, 1; B4, 4; C1, 14; C2, 17; C3, 10; C4, 5; D1, 28; D2, 28; D3, 31; D4, 16; D5, 1; E1, 16; E2, 25; E5, 21; licensed, 10.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The total abolition of many scholarships to town children, as proposed at the recent Conference of School Inspectors, is one deserving of serious consideration, for in many cases the money enables parents to give clever children an opportunity of advancement which might otherwise be denied them. The State's duty is to capture and develop brilliant intellects, and it is a question whether the "free place" business is not being developed at the expense of exceptionally good pupils.

As the result of close observation of pupils in the Wanganui Education District who have gained and utilized scholarships during the last fifteen years at least, it is not too much to say that they have