

TEACHERS' RESIDENCES.—Grave cause of complaint arises from the neglect of the Department to make grants for new residences and for additions to old residences. In three cases teachers are compelled to live in tents, and one or two rooms are the only luxuries provided for some teachers. It is to be hoped that this state of things will not be allowed to continue, for it is a just cause of complaint.

FREE BOOKS.—It is perhaps too early to give a definite pronouncement as to the advantage of free Readers, but the Board is in a position to say—(1) That many parents do not want free books, and will not allow their children to use them; (2) that the grant has been insufficient to allow of the Board's purchasing suitable continuous Readers for the preparatory classes; (3) that the conditions of the grant make it necessary for the Board to finance the cost for six or nine months and pay the interest out of a depleted general account. If free school-books are to be given, a commencement should be made in the higher standards, where the burden of expensive books frequently compels parents to withdraw their children from school when extra tuition would be of considerable benefit to them.

PAYMENTS TO COMMITTEES.—The abolition of the special grant of 9d. per head to School Committees not only places a greater burden on the Board's Maintenance Fund, but is another evidence of the want of consideration shown by the Department to the Board, for no notice of the non-recurrence of the grant was given until the end of the Board's financial year. This action affords another proof of the impossibility of making any estimate of the Board's revenue in advance of its receipt, and yet the law prescribes that an estimate must be made at the beginning of the year.

REGULATIONS.—In view of the many changes that have been made in recent years in the administrative and executive machinery of education, the Board found that it would be absolutely necessary to have a fresh set of regulations prepared. After much consideration and no little delay, revised general regulations were issued, and also revised regulations as to scholarships, pupil-teachers, and probationers.

TRAINING-COLLEGE STUDENTS.—It has been the custom in the past to utilize the services of students at the Wellington Training College as relieving-teachers during the time the college is closed—a system of considerable convenience to the Board, and a great help to the teachers, who find it impossible to make both ends meet in a city like Wellington on the small allowance made by the Department. All of a sudden the Department discovered that these students were earning £5 a year outside of the £60 allowance, and that amount was promptly deducted from the teachers who preferred to spend their holidays usefully instead of basking in the sun of idleness. It is questionable whether this deduction is legal, as the regulations prescribe payments of £30 a year, and £30 lodging-allowance, without qualification. If these teachers spent their holidays at other work than teaching, in competition with the general public, no deduction would be made by the Department at all. The injustice of the deduction naturally rankles in the minds of the students, the great majority of whom have to rely upon their own resources for their maintenance. When it is remembered that their ages range from eighteen years upwards, that in any other occupation they would be paid far more than £60 a year, and that it is difficult to persuade promising youths to take up the work of teaching, this treatment of those bent upon self-improvement to be utilized in training the children of the Dominion can only be fitly characterized in language which would probably be out of place here.

A PROTEST.—It is impossible to conclude a review of the work of the Board for the year without referring to the relations existing with the Education Department. Of late years a most extraordinary position has been taken up by the officials in the Head Department, presumably with the sanction of the Minister. Instead of the Education Boards being allowed to carry out the duties they are elected to perform, and for which the law lays down the lines very fully, the Department takes up the attitude that it furthers the cause of education by hampering the Board's operations in every possible way, restricting their powers by every conceivable artifice, flouting their authority by acting over their heads in giving instructions direct to the Board's officers, in summoning conferences of the Board's officials without first inquiring if the dates chosen are convenient in view of their duties, and by limiting the Board's powers by suddenly reducing the grants without notice to such an extent as to leave it floundering in a financial morass. It seems about time that a conference of Boards was held to consider whether this latest development of bureaucratic government is to be allowed to threaten the existence of educational representative bodies, to curtail their usefulness, and to make men of experience wonder whether it is worth while continuing the struggle against departmental domination, or whether the full meaning of section 44 of the Education Act shall be carried out.

Once more the Board desires to place on record its appreciation of the satisfactory work performed by the great majority of the teachers, especially those who have passed their educational probation in this district.

The Board has been fortunate in retaining the services of its three Inspectors—Mr. G. D. Braik (chief), Mr. J. Milne, and Mr. T. B. Strong. Last year an exceptionally heavy strain was put upon them in the classification of teachers, but they have proved fully equal to all demands. Mr. Braik, in particular, has won a high place in the esteem of teachers, Committees, and members of the Board for his invariable courtesy, efficiency, resourcefulness, and enthusiasm.

I have, &c.,

FRED. PIRANI, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

[NOTE.—This report is reprinted as it was received from the Board, although it contains several inaccurate statements.]