

satisfactory. The Board is aware that in some outlying districts the roads, especially in winter, are not fit for vehicular traffic; and it is suggested that provision should be made in such cases for payment of the allowance to those who ride on horseback to school, such being the only practicable means of transport. The Board has in its office a photographic and striking illustration of the benefit of this method of conveyance.

Teachers.—There were on the 31st December last 352 teachers in the service of the Board, classified according to rank, sex, and certificate qualification, as shown in the following tabular statement:—

Rank.	Male.	Female.	Total.	Certificated.	Licensed.	Uncertificated.	Total.
Heads of schools	50	18	68	67	..	1	68
Sole teachers	41	70	111	44	5	62	111
Assistants ^{1/2}	19	103	122	68	2	52	122
Pupil-teachers	12	24	36	..	..	..	..
Probationers .. .. .	..	15	15	..	..	..	..
	122	230	352	179	7	115	301

These figures, taken in comparison with those of the preceding year, show that, while the number of male teachers remains exactly stationary, the female teachers in the service have increased by nineteen, thus accentuating the disparity in the sexes as referred to in consecutive reports for many years past.

The Board notes with satisfaction the fact that a large and increasing proportion of the uncertificated teachers in its service are making an honest endeavour to attain to certificated rank, and, while it has framed regulations to compel uncertificated teachers to strive to improve their status, these regulations are partly nullified by the fact that till more certificated teachers are available from our training colleges, and the demand for teachers exceeds the supply of those who are so trained, the Board is continuously forced to appoint untrained and uncertificated teachers to its schools. No arbitrary or drastic compelling regulation can be successfully applied, but the Board believes that in view of the increasing numbers who are passing out from the training colleges of the Dominion fully qualified, both by certificate and experience, to accept permanent service in the various education districts, the outlook for those "resting on their oars" in respect to classification is not too promising. From a considerable number of the uncertificated teachers in its employ the Board is receiving useful and, in some instances, meritorious service, but this is unfortunately not true in respect to a lesser number holding minor positions on the teaching staff. On the principle that "half a loaf is better than no bread," the pupils attending the schools in many country districts have to suffer to a greater or less degree from inefficient instruction. For this state of affairs there is no apparent remedy till the supply of teachers from our training institutions equals the demand: and then only if more liberal salaries are provided for the teachers of backblock schools. An increase in the education vote in this direction seems to be inevitable, if remote country districts are to receive a larger share of the benefits conferred by our education system. It is not reasonable to expect that capable and trained teachers will accept service in localities where they are deprived of many social and other advantages unless they are adequately remunerated for their services.

The minimum salary for sole teachers in small country schools will, the Board believes, require to be increased within certain limits, irrespective of the average attendance; thus only will the service be made attractive to young teachers possessing the necessary educational and other qualifications for this important work.

School Buildings.—The Board acknowledges with satisfaction the increased departmental grants for the maintenance of school buildings. In this district, where nearly all the school buildings and teachers' residences are erected of wood, the matter of making provision for repairs, renovation, and reinstatement is a serious problem which will in the future become increasingly difficult to solve. The Board some years ago adopted the system of executing repairs with a staff of carpenters working under the direct supervision of its architect, and has good reason to be satisfied with the results as compared with the system of tendering for repairs previously in operation; and, indeed, the Board is so well satisfied with the result that its extension is contemplated, so that ultimately all repairs may be carried out on this principle. For the erection of new school buildings and additions, however, where definite specification of the work required to be carried out can be made, tenders are invited.

During the past year new schools have been erected in the Districts of Chatton North, Waikawa, Kapuka South, and Birchwood; and additions made to the existing buildings at Bluff, Waikiwi, and Edendale. New residences for the teachers at Kennington (the old residence and glebe being sold), South Wyndham, and Clifden have also been provided. Special grants to cover the whole or partial cost of these new works have been provided by the Department, the total expenditure on which amounted to £2,628 2s. 9d., as shown in the Board's balance-sheet. The Board has in contemplation for the coming year (1913) several very important undertakings, the principal of which is the erection of a new school building at Waihopai (Gladstone) to provide for the requirements of that district, and also for a section of the pupils at present in attendance at the Invercargill Park School, which it has been resolved to close when the new building is ready for occupation. The Board also has in view the erection of a modern building to serve the purposes of an infant department in connexion with the Winton School, and which, when erected, will supersede the present somewhat obsolete structure. To enable these works to be successfully accomplished application has been made to the Department for special grants to cover the cost, and the Board anticipates a favourable response to its appeal in both cases.