

members was very satisfactory, and a great deal of time was devoted to the ever-increasing duties connected with the administration of educational matters in the district.

The Board's Staff.—Mr. John Neill, who had been Secretary to the Board for nearly thirty years, retired on superannuation at the end of the year, and was relieved of his active duties in May. He had a reputation and a record for careful administration, strenuous attention to every detail of his arduous duties, and of successful financial management of which any one might be justly proud. He was at the same time a genial and obliging officer, and commanded the confidence of Board, Committees, teachers, and the general public. He carries with him into his retirement the best wishes and good will of all with whom he worked. Mr. A. Bell was appointed Mr. Neill's successor.

Manual and Technical Instruction.—[See E.-5, Report on Manual and Technical Instruction.]

The Board has felt for some time that it was necessary to provide a third Inspector. The district is an extensive one, the number of schools (particularly of sole-teacher schools) is large, and the proportion of uncertificated teachers needing frequent help and guidance from Inspectors is greater than in most districts of the Dominion. The principal reason that has led the Board to postpone the appointment of another Inspector in the past has been lack of funds, but the increasing attendance at Southland schools, with the corresponding increase of revenue, has gradually removed this objection, and the Board has decided to appoint the third man during the current year.

Schools.—During 1913 new schools were opened at Ermedale, Lillburn, and Puysegur Point, all being small Grade 0 schools; while the small schools at Dog Island, Manapouri, and Sunnyside were closed. The Board also decided to close Motu Rimu at the end of the year. The number of schools in operation at the end of the year was 180.

Petitions for new schools at Waimatua, Mataura-mains, Brown's, Wakapatu, Limehills East, Gore West, and Maori Hill were dealt with, and either the applications were declined or consideration was postponed. The Board is disinclined to recommend the establishment of small country schools where it is reasonably possible for the children to attend existing schools, and has again and again impressed upon parents that it is more advantageous for their children to travel some distance to an efficient school of moderate size than to attend a small school that might be established nearer home under the management of an inexperienced and uncertificated teacher. Still, it is difficult to resist the numerous and persistent applications that are received for these small schools, and for some years at least the establishment of small schools will be forced upon the Board to meet the needs of settlers in the far-back blocks of the large territory under its administration as such territory gradually comes under closer settlement. It is even more difficult to close small long-established schools that have outlived their usefulness, even where the gradually diminishing number of pupils might without any hardship attend neighbouring schools.

The question, however, that has occupied the consideration of the Board most, and that has caused the greatest controversy, has been the provision of schools for the City of Invercargill. As population increases the suburban and residential area is extending in all directions, and the attendance at some of the schools (particularly the South School) has mounted up till the accommodation has become inadequate. On the other hand, the business area occupied by shops, offices, and factories is also extending, so that in the near future the attendance at the schools near the centre of the city will materially decrease. With the view of providing for the new suburban areas, the Board has recommended new schools on the south near Tramway Road (St. George) and on the east at Hawthorndale, has secured suitable sites for these, and has applied for grants for new buildings. It is hoped that these schools will be in operation before the end of the current year.

When the Park School was partly destroyed by fire during 1912 the Board, after full consideration, decided to close the Park and Waihopai Schools, and to build a new school in Herbert Street, to be called the Queen's Park School, and this new building is now nearing completion. There has, however, been a good deal of opposition to this action, particularly in the Park School district. Board members themselves are now divided in their opinions over the matter, and in response to applications from the School Committee and to a petition from householders, it has recently been decided to retain the Park School as a side school.

School Attendance.—The attendance, 9,883, at the schools continues to increase steadily. The following figures show the increases for the past five years:—

	Average Roll	Average Attendance.	Percentage.
1909	10,049	8,778	87·3
1912	10,792	9,552	88·5
1913	10,966	9,671	88·2

With the view of assisting and maintaining a good attendance, the Board requires teachers to furnish monthly lists of defaulters under the compulsory clauses of the Act on forms provided for the purpose, but the Truant Officer has again and again to report the neglect of a number of teachers to comply with the regulations, framed partly for their own benefit. The Board has, however, decided to insist on the furnishing of these monthly lists, and trusts that in future no head teacher will be so negligent in the matter.

Free School-books.—During 1913 the supply of free text-books to pupils was discontinued, except that free continuous readers were still provided for all children, and that free books were supplied to children whose parents were unable to pay for them, and to children coming from another district, where different books were used. The change has been received with general satisfaction by teachers and officers of the Board, and by a large body of parents who objected to the use by their children of books previously used by others.

School Libraries.—The Government offered during 1913 subsidies equal to the amounts raised locally by School Committees in aid of school libraries, the subsidies in each case being limited to a capitation of 9d. on the average attendance, and to the sum of £10. Only twelve Committees out of 180 took advantage of this offer, the total amount of subsidies paid over by the Board being £29 4s. 6d. More applications would have been received, but the amount offered to schools