

OTAGO DISTRICT.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE DUNEDIN TECHNICAL SCHOOL BOARD.

While the enrolments for the Technical High School increased by twenty-four, there was a decrease of 101 in those for the evening classes. This falling-off was the result of the depletion of the trade classes in carpentry, plumbing, blacksmithing, and painters' work owing to the enlistment of many of the students. The students of the engineering and the commercial courses being younger, these classes were not affected by the war to nearly the same extent. The total enrolments for the year were as follows: Technical High School, 339; technical classes, 1,103.

For some years past the necessity of providing for practical instruction in agriculture has been repeatedly before the Board, but so far no progress has been made. In his report for 1915 the Director pointed out that "a plot of ground for experimental work is an urgent necessity"; and again in the report for 1916 he says, "Referring to agriculture, I have to point out, although we have appropriate courses in ironwork and farm blacksmithing, woodwork, science and agriculture, wool-sorting, &c., we have no farm grounds for dealing practically with the most important part of the subject. In view of the increasing number of boys applying for admission to the agricultural course, this state of affairs should not be allowed to continue."

A committee was set up in the session of 1916 to deal with this matter, and an effort was made to obtain a piece of land. After an inspection of several properties the Board ultimately offered to purchase 22 acres of land on Pine Hill, the property of the Hospital and Charitable Aid Board, which was for sale. When, however, the Hospital Board was approached that body, on the advice of its Finance Committee, adjourned for six months' consideration our application to purchase, and this period has not yet expired. And so the matter rests at present. But the necessity of obtaining such land is very great and very urgent. Agriculture is the most important industry of the country, and the proper systematic and scientific teaching of this branch of education perhaps the most important work of technical schools. Recognizing as it does the necessity for this practical instruction, the Board intends to make provision for the same, and hopes within the next few months to be able to secure a suitable piece of land sufficient to provide experimental plots for an elementary course of agriculture. Then, as soon as this has been placed on a working basis, the Board will require to obtain possession of a moderately sized farm for the purpose of affording the boys of the agricultural course an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the various agricultural operations and of dealing with horses, sheep, and cattle. If the property at Pine Hill is obtained the Board hopes to erect buildings of an economical type to serve as a hostel for boys from a distance attending the College. The great increase in the attendance at the Technical High School has emphasized the need for increased accommodation, especially in connection with the physical training of the pupils and the recreation of the girls during recess hours. In wet weather the pupils of the day school have hitherto had no place outside the school itself to which to retire, and were granted the use of the corridors and several of the rooms. In view of this state of affairs the Board resolved to erect a building containing an assembly hall and recess-rooms. When tenders for the work were opened it was found that the amount required was much more than the estimated cost. The Education Department, however, at once promised a grant of £1,937 in aid of the erection of the building which, inclusive of the architect's fee, cost of lighting, heating, asphaltting, &c., will cost approximately £4,500. The economical policy followed by the Board during the last few years fortunately enables the general funds to provide the balance of the amount required. Mr. Alexander Burt, a member of the Board, and for many years President of the original Dunedin Technical Classes Association, has donated the sum of £100 as half-cost of the lighting and heating appliances. It is proposed to call the main room of the new building the "Burt Hall" as a recognition of his long connection with and great interest in the Dunedin Technical School.

During the year additions have been made to the furniture and equipment for class-teaching, although only in those instances where it was not considered wise to delay further. Grants have been promised by the Department for the purchase of apparatus and appliances for the mechanical engineering, the electrical engineering, and the science departments, but the replies received to inquiries made in Britain and in America convinced the Managers that efforts should be made to postpone till after the war the purchase of the equipment required for the departments mentioned. Towards the end of the year, however, it was found necessary to authorize the purchase of new typewriting-machines at a cost of £370, but owing to the shipping difficulty they have not yet come to hand. During the year the grounds have been considerably improved in appearance, and at the end of the year arrangements were made for the asphaltting of a large part of the upper playground.

The statement of receipts and expenditure submitted shows that the Board's account had to credit a bank balance amounting to £4,211 0s. 10d., but of this approximately £2,370 represented liabilities upon contracts for building and asphaltting.

Members of the Board desire to place on record their appreciation of the services rendered by the teaching staff and officers, whose combined aim always seems to be to conserve the interests of the Dunedin Technical School while at the same time maintaining its reputation. The success of our students in the Government Shorthand-Typists' Examination, in the City and Guilds of London Institute Examinations, the Public Service and Matriculation Examinations, testifies to the efficiency of the class-teaching, and the Managers have already tendered their sincere thanks to the members of the teaching staff who are responsible for the excellent results attained.

THOS. SCOTT, Chairman.

ANGUS MARSHALL, Secretary.