

Visiting Schools.—As previously, members of the Board visited most of the schools in the district, and were pleased to find that in almost all cases considerable improvement in school grounds and surroundings was noticeable. The Board recognizes and records with appreciation the excellent work of its School Committees generally, many having, by their untiring efforts, raised sums of money which have materially helped towards the improvement of their school-grounds, in some cases improvements being so noticeable as to become a model for others.

I have, &c.,

P. J. H. WHITE, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 31st March, 1921.

I have the honour to present a report on the proceedings of this Board for the year 1920.

Board.—The biennial election took place in July. Mr. E. V. Laws was elected for the Wanganui Urban Area, and Mr. A. J. Mahon for the Palmerston North Urban Area. Messrs. A. J. Joblin, W. A. Collins, and H. McIntyre were re-elected for the North Ward, West Ward, and South Ward respectively. Mr. W. A. Collins was elected Chairman. Mr. P. C. Freeth (Palmerston North Urban Area), owing to pressure of business, retired at the end of the year. Mr. W. R. Birnie was elected to the vacancy.

The Board was represented on other bodies as follows: Wanganui Girls' College Board of Governors, Messrs. F. Pirani, A. Fraser, and W. A. Collins; Palmerston North High School Board of Governors, Messrs. T. R. Hodder, P. C. Freeth, and J. A. Nash; Wanganui Technical College Committee, Messrs. M. Bruce, W. A. Collins, and E. V. Laws. Mr. H. McIntyre was re-elected a member of the Committee of Advice of the Teachers' Training College, Wellington, as representative of the Wanganui, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, and Nelson Education Districts.

Schools and Attendance.—New schools were opened at Matahiwi, Matauia, Pungataua, Tuapaka, and Te Miro (Grade 0). Manui and Momohaki (Grade I) were reopened. Tuapaka and Matauia were closed by the end of the year, and also Denlair, Hiwi, Watershed Road, Cook's Mill, Lacy's Landing, Makohau, Makohine Valley, and Ohutu. Kakatahi was closed temporarily. At the close of the year there were open 198 main and four side schools, graded as follows: Grade 0, 17; Grade I, 58; Grade II, 34; Grade IIIA, 47; Grade IIIB, 12; Grade IVA, 9; Grade IVB, 3; Grade IVC, 3; Grade VA, 1; Grade VB, 4; Grade VC, 2; Grade VD, 1; Grade VIB, 1; Grade VIIA, 3; Grade VIIB, 1; Grade VIIc, 1; Grade VIIe, 1.

The total roll at the end of the year was 15,748, being an increase of 303 over the previous year. There were 143 pupils receiving instruction in the secondary departments of district high schools, an increase of nine. The average attendance for the year was 13,394, and the average weekly roll number 15,584. Although the roll at the end of the year was 303 above the roll at the end of 1920, the average attendance for the year shows a decrease of 590. These figures will give an indication of the extent to which the attendance was affected by sickness during the year. The average attendance expressed as a percentage of the average roll was 85.9, the lowest for some years. The Attendance Officer reports that the year was the worst he has known for sickness amongst pupils. He paid 273 visits to schools: 166 informations were laid against parents, and 144 convictions were recorded out of 156 cases proceeded with.

Teachers.—The number of adult teachers in the Board's service, excluding eleven relieving teachers, was 420. Of these 120 were uncertificated, sixteen being in charge of Grade 0 schools, forty-nine in charge of Grade I schools, seven in charge of Grade II schools, and forty-eight were assistants receiving salaries of Grades I and II. There were ten male and forty-one female pupil-teachers and five male and thirty-three female probationers, a total of eighty-nine, on the staff at the close of the year. The Board was able to appoint every qualified applicant at the beginning of the current year.

National Scholarships.—The total annual value of the twenty-three Junior and eighteen Senior Scholarships in force at the end of the year was £925 10s.

Conveyance and Boarding Allowance.—Conveyance allowance was paid for an average of 120 children in attendance at twenty-five schools, and boarding-allowance for an average of twenty-three children in attendance at ten schools. The total expenditure was £653 18s. 4d.

Voluntary Contributions.—£1,273 5s. 2d. was received during the year by way of voluntary contributions in cash towards the cost of carrying out improvements to grounds, purchase of sites, equipment, and library books; £283 16s. 6d. was received for manual and technical classes. The current year promises to be a record year in the matter of voluntary contributions, at least £3,000 having been raised to date.

Medical Inspection.—Excellent work has been done by the School Medical Officer. She has succeeded in securing the co-operation of parents, many of whom attend the schools while their children are being medically examined. They appreciate this privilege, and there is no doubt that a much larger percentage of the parents than formerly give heed to the medical reports and see that their children receive medical attention. Numerous requests are made by parents for the examination of children who are in classes above those usually examined. Tooth-brush drill is now carried out daily in the majority of schools in the district, and teachers report that there is a great improvement in the condition of the children's mouths and in their general health. Rarely does one find a teacher desiring to discontinue tooth-brush drill once he has got it established. The Board has given the use of a room in its office for a school dental clinic, and it is expected that the Department will shortly be able to appoint an officer to take charge.