

district. To foster the teaching of dairy science a course of instruction was given at Greymouth and Hokitika towards the end of the year.

Agriculture.—As might be expected, in this district there was an increasing interest in agricultural education during the year, and agricultural societies and horticultural societies have done their best to stimulate and strengthen this interest. About four hundred pupils received instruction in the rural courses taken at the district high schools.

Technical and continuation classes were carried on wherever there was a demand for them. The Supervisor's report gives detailed information showing steady and solid advance and increased interest in the work.

Irregular Attendance.—As noted elsewhere in this report, there was a large decrease in average attendance during the year. This was caused by sickness, which affected the whole district, the attendance in the infant classes being seriously reduced in consequence. Under these anomalous conditions the Board's attendance officers were compelled to exercise great care before taking extreme measures against offending parents. In consequence of the steps taken to enforce the provisions of the Act, a great improvement has taken place in the attendance of pupils at the Ashburton Technical School. It would be well if the respective managers of other technical schools took similar measures to ensure the attendance of young persons between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years.

I have, &c.,

ERNEST H. ANDREWS, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 31st March, 1921.

I have the honour to submit the following report of the Education Board of the District of Otago for the year 1920 :—

Board.—No change in the membership of the Board has occurred since the election in 1916. The members now in office are : Urban Area—Messrs. W. R. Brugh, Robert H. S. Todd, James Wallace, and James H. Wilkinson ; North Ward—Messrs. Donald Borrie and George Livingstone ; Central Ward—Messrs. James Horn, M.P., and James Smith ; South Ward—Hon. D. T. Fleming, M.L.C., and Mr. Parker McKinlay, M.A. Mr. James Wallace continues to fill the office of Chairman. Thirty-six meetings of the Board have been held. The following were the Board's representatives on various educational bodies : Council of the University of Otago—Mr. P. McKinlay, M.A. ; Otago High Schools' Board—Hon. D. T. Fleming, M.L.C., and Mr. W. R. Brugh ; Waitaki High Schools' Board—Mr. James Mitchell. Boards of Management of Associated (Technical) Classes : Dunedin—Messrs. W. R. Brugh, James Horn, M.P., P. McKinlay, M.A., E. A. Rosevear, R. H. S. Todd, James Wallace, and J. H. Wilkinson ; Oamaru—Mr. James Mitchell ; Milton—Messrs. P. McKinlay, M.A., and W. B. Graham.

Number of Schools.—The number of schools in operation at the end of the year was 253, the same number as in the previous year. Four of these were household schools. Ten had an average below 9 ; seventy-nine from 9 to 20 ; fifty-eight from 21 to 35 ; fifty-five from 36 to 80 ; twelve from 81 to 120 ; nine from 121 to 160 ; four from 161 to 200 ; seven from 201 to 360 ; six from 361 to 480 ; and thirteen over 480.

Attendance of Pupils.—The average roll, average attendance, and percentage of average attendance for the year were 21,981, 19,479, and 88.63 respectively. Owing to the prevalence of influenza in a mild form in Dunedin and suburbs and in a few country districts early in the year it was considered expedient to keep all the schools in Otago closed during the month of February. The epidemic gradually spread throughout the district, and it may be said that practically all the schools suffered from it, many country schools having to be closed a second time. Influenza was followed by smallpox, measles, mumps, and diphtheria, and it was not until late in the year that the conditions for regular school attendance could be said to be normal. These interruptions of school-work have, of course, very markedly lowered the figures for school attendance for the year, a decrease of 249 in the roll number, of 984 in the average attendance, and of 3.4 in the percentage of average attendance having to be recorded. The provision made by the Government to obviate undue curtailment of school staffs owing to the decreased averages—viz., that in all schools the attendance at which was affected by the prevailing epidemics the average for any one quarter shall be accepted as the average for the year—is, on the whole, an equitable solution of the difficulty.

The following table shows the increase, since the institution of the Otago education scheme in 1856, in the number of schools, teachers and pupils :—

Year.	Number of Schools.	Number of Teachers.	On the Roll.	Average Attendance.	Percentage of Attendance, Otago District.	Percentage of Attendance for Whole of Dominion.
1856-57	5	7	..	236
1876	165	329	13,537	11,210
1896	218	554	22,091	19,502	85.9	81.4
1916	261	754	21,880	20,237	92.4	88.6
1919	253	752	22,230	20,463	92.03	90.3
1920	253	783	21,981	19,479	88.63	87.0