

greatest possible value obtainable is secured to the State in return, and that, to insure this result, the whole of the amount voted should be applied to the foundation of scholarships open for competition to all scholars attending the public schools of New Zealand, irrespective of locality. If this were done it would be easy, and also very advantageous, to frame regulations so that candidates satisfying certain conditions at these examinations could obtain Civil Service certificates, thus holding out an additional inducement to scholars to present themselves as competitors. Another very useful purpose would be served by thus making the scholarship examinations colonial instead of provincial—viz., the opportunity it would afford of comparing, with some approach to accuracy, the relative proficiency of the scholars in the several education districts.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—There are now eighteen pupil-teachers in the service of the Board. The examination of pupil-teachers—which has hitherto been carried on simultaneously with those of the school in which they are employed—was this year, on the recommendation of the Inspector, conducted at Hokitika, all the pupil-teachers of the district being examined at the same time. This the Board believes to be a step in the right direction, and the small extra cost may be regarded as a judicious expenditure. The number and classification of the pupil-teachers now in the Board's service, and since the results of the examination have been declared, are as follows: Males: First class, 1; second class, 1; third class, 1; fourth class, 2: total, 5. Females: First class, 5; second class, 3; third class, 3; fourth class, 2: total, 13. Although without much expectation that it will be of any avail, the Board desires once more to express its firm conviction that the present arrangements for the examination and classification of pupil-teachers are most unsatisfactory, and highly prejudicial to the whole system of education. That the future teaching staff of this colony should be passing the early and most valuable years of their educational life under thirteen widely-differing systems of instruction and training seems of itself sufficient to condemn the existing arrangements in the judgment of all who have the interests of education at heart; and probably there are very few, if any, of the Education Boards who would not gladly hand over this portion of their duties to the department, though the smaller districts that have not the means to establish and maintain suitable training institutions would doubtless be the chief gainers by the alteration. Meantime, and until this most desirable change is effected, the Board is of opinion that arrangements similar to those referred to in connection with scholarship examinations should be made between the department and the Inspectors, that would entitle pupil-teachers satisfying certain conditions to receive certificates of competency under the Civil Service Regulations.

The Board desires once more to express its firm conviction that, in the interests of education, it is highly desirable that the entire machinery of inspection and examination should be under the immediate control of the Minister of Education, and that, consequently, the Inspectors should be appointed and paid by the department. It is also the opinion of the Board that, until this change is effected, steps should be taken from time to time to ascertain the relative proficiency of scholars in the same standards in the different education districts. At present there are no means of testing this; and pupils classed in, say, the Fourth Standard in one district are often found unfit for the Third in another. This doubtless arises from the greater or less severity of the pass examinations; which also causes the results of one district to compare unfavourably with those of another, though the scholars in a district having a comparatively low percentage of passes may really be in advance of and better taught than those in a district showing apparently more favourable results.

The Inspector's report, which accompanies this, contains the usual information respecting the condition of the schools in the district, together with the returns required to be furnished under the new regulations for the inspection of schools.

The report of the examiner of candidates for the scholarship for 1887, which was received before the date of this, confirms the opinion that the Board has held all along—viz., that as regards the condition of primary education Westland is no whit behind larger and more favoured districts. The late examination showed, moreover, that the proficiency of the scholars is not confined to the more important schools, but that it is general throughout the district. The eighteen candidates for the present year's scholarship represent schools from all parts of the district. One candidate, a girl from Gillespie's school, went thence to Hokitika, a distance of a hundred miles, on horseback, to attend the examination. The first and second in order of merit were scholars from country schools. The fact of the examination being conducted by a gentleman having no connection with Westland removes any suspicion of partiality, which some might have entertained had the report been written by a resident in the district.

At the close of the second year during which the management of educational affairs in Westland has been left in the hands of those most interested in the welfare and best acquainted with the requirements of the district, the Board ventures to assert that the administration has been such as to justify the action of the Legislature in acceding to the wishes of the inhabitants, and to express a hope that the Legislature will take steps, prior to the termination of the session of Parliament, 1887, to repeal the 13th section of "The Westland and Grey Education Act, 1885," and enact in lieu thereof that the Westland Education District shall be an education district under "The Education Act, 1877."

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

I have, &c.,

R. J. SEDDON, Chairman.