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Examined and found correct—J. K. WARBURTON, Controller and Auditor-General.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present the report of the Education Board of the District of Marlborough for the year ending 31st December, 1896.

At the beginning of the year the Board was composed of the following persons: The Hon. W. D. H. Baillie, M.L.C., Thomas Carter, John Clervaux Chaytor, John Duncan, John Alison Lambert, Charles Houghton Mills, M.H.R., William Benoni Parker, Joseph Henry Redwood, and Arthur Penrose Seymour. Messrs. Lambert, Carter, and Redwood retired by rotation at the end of March. Mr. Lambert did not offer himself for re-election. Messrs. Carter and Redwood were re-elected, and Mr. Thomas Lindsay Buick was elected to fill the seat vacated by Mr. Lambert. At the first meeting of the Board, Mr. A. P. Seymour, who had filled the office of Chairman uninterruptedly since the first constitution of the Board, was again unanimously chosen for the same position. The Board held fourteen meetings during the year. The Hon. Captain Baillie attended 7 meetings; Mr. Carter, 14; Mr. Chaytor, 13; Mr. Duncan, 8; Mr. Parker, 12; Mr. Redwood, 11; Mr. Mills, 5; Mr. Seymour, 6; Mr. Lambert, 1; and Mr. Buick, 4. The average attendance of members during the year was 5.78.

**SCHOOL DISTRICTS.**—The number of school districts under the Act at the beginning of the year was twenty-five. In consequence of the purchase of the Hawkesbury Estate by the Government, and of its subdivision for closer settlement, it was found necessary to constitute a new district, which has been named the Omaka School District. Probably the occupation of the Blind River Estate in the same manner will render necessary the formation of another district in the near future.

**SCHOOLS.**—Sixty schools have been in operation during the year, three small aided schools having been temporarily closed since the end of 1895. Two of these will probably be re-opened shortly, and several fresh applications for assistance have been granted or are under consideration. The average roll-number for the year was 2,254·75, and the (working) average attendance was 1,831·75, or 81 per cent., a slight falling-off from last year's average.

**BUILDINGS.**—The balance in hand on the Building Account at the beginning of the year was £76 9s. 6d., which, with the proceeds of the sale of the old school building at Onamalutu, £13 10s., was all the Board had to work on during the year, as the amount allotted to this district out of the building vote was not received until after the end of the year. The following are the most important works undertaken during the year: The new school at Canvastown was finished, and a teacher's residence erected. The Board supplied all the timber and other materials for two schools in the Pelorus Sound—namely, at Tira Bay and Waitaria Bay, the inhabitants undertaking to erect them at their own cost. These buildings are both larger than actually necessary for the requirements of their respective neighbourhoods, as they are intended to be used as centres for holding the annual examinations of sundry small household-schools in the vicinity. Plans and specifications for these buildings were supplied by the Board's architect, and the inhabitants deserve great credit for their share of the work. The school at Tira Bay has been completed and in use since the beginning of 1897. That at Waitaria Bay is not yet finished. Extensive repairs or additions have been executed at Blenheim, Picton, Grovetown, Spring Creek, Waitohi, Fairhall, and other schools. The new school sites at Canvastown and Blind River have been substantially fenced, and at Havelock and Havelock Suburban old and decayed fences have been removed and new ones erected. The purchase of the Canvastown site has been completed; and, taking advantage of a favourable opportunity, the Board has purchased two allotments of land adjoining the Blenheim School grounds, on one of which stands a cottage, the close proximity of which to the infant school and the teacher's residence might have caused serious annoyance and some little risk (in the event of fire) to those buildings. These operations left the Building Account £1,233 in debt to the General Account, but the debt has since been reduced (by the receipt of last year's building grant) to £303. Since the end of the year the Board has accepted tenders for building new schools