

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 1st March, 1906.

In accordance with the provisions of "The Education Act, 1904," I have the honour to submit the report of the Education Board of the District of South Canterbury for the year ending 31st December, 1905.

THE BOARD.—At the beginning of the year the Board was composed of the following members: Messrs. G. W. Armitage, John Campbell, William M. Hamilton, William B. Howell, J.P., John Jackson, J.P., Daniel McCaskill, J.P., John S. Rutherford, J.P., John Talbot, J.P., and the Rev. George Barclay, J.P. Messrs. Campbell, Howell, and McCaskill retired during the year, and the election to fill the vacancies resulted in the re-election of the Messrs. Howell and McCaskill, and in the election of Mr. C. S. Howard. It is with feelings of deep regret that the Board has to record the deaths of two of its members during the year, Mr. Campbell dying before the election was complete, and Mr. McCaskill soon after the declaration of the results. Mr. Thomas Sherratt, of Geraldine, was elected to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. McCaskill. In August Mr. Howell was elected Chairman of the Board for the tenth time in succession. The Board held twelve meetings during the year, the average attendance of members being seven.

THE SCHOOLS.—There were 74 schools in operation during the year. New school districts were declared at Gray's Corner, Rosewill, and Tycho, and contracts let for the erection of buildings.

TEACHERS.—In December, 1905, there were in the service of the Board 147 teachers; of these 124 were adults, and 23 pupil-teachers. Of the adults, 51 were men and 73 were women; of the pupil-teachers, 8 were males and 15 were females.

"THE EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT ACT, 1905."—The new provisions for the appointment of teachers will not materially alter the method adopted in this district some years ago; indeed, with the exception of some unimportant details, the steps provided by the Act are the same as those practised by this Board.

The increases in salaries will be welcomed by teachers, especially by those in charge of small country schools. The Act now provides for a salary at the rate of £6 per unit of the average attendance of the smallest schools. One result of the increased pay has been that it is not now so difficult as it was formerly to get teachers for our small schools. Certainly the teachers are often not so competent and well-trained as could be wished for, still it is hoped that the time is not far distant when the Board will be able to provide all except the very smallest schools with fully certificated teachers.

The new provisions for the staffing of district high schools have compelled the Board to give notice of dismissal to six teachers in order to adjust the staffs in accordance with the requirements of the amended Act. This has been a hardship to some of the teachers concerned.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—During 1905 four ex-pupil-teachers and one other student from this district attended the Training College, Christchurch, and it is expected that about twelve more will be in attendance during 1906. The experience thus gained by these teachers should materially help them in their subsequent careers, and it is hoped that in future few of our pupil-teachers will be satisfied unless they spend at least one year at a training college. It is worthy of note that with one exception all the pupil-teachers appointed during 1905 and the first two months of 1906 (fourteen in all) had passed the Matriculation Examination.

SUPERANNUATION.—The Board views with satisfaction the passing of the Superannuation Act, making provision for the paying of retiring-allowances to teachers and others in the Education service. Not only will this provide for the retirement of many who have given a lifetime to the cause of education, but it will hold out a strong inducement to those contemplating entering the service.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The annual scholarship examinations were held in December, the number of candidates being, for the junior examination 18, for the senior examination 14. The latter examination was conducted for the first time by the Education Department on the same papers as the Civil Service Junior Examination. One reason for this change was that many candidates for senior free places in secondary schools were saved from sitting for two or three examinations in close succession. Nine Senior and 10 Junior Scholarships were awarded.

SCHOOL FURNITURE.—The desks in use in many of our schools are very old, out of date, inconvenient, and uncomfortable. Recently all infant schools have been supplied with desks, and the old galleries have in most cases been displaced. The Board has now under consideration the question of adopting for general purposes a more comfortable and hygienic school desk. From many points of view the best desk is undoubtedly the single desk, but the floor space in many of our schools is too limited for its adoption unless the accommodation provided is to be increased. Whether the single or the dual desk is chosen, the Board hopes soon to be able to find a satisfactory type of desk which can be made at a reasonable cost in the colony. Single desks for the secondary classes of the district high schools have been ordered from America.

PHYSICAL DRILL.—This subject has received attention in almost every school in the district, and while generally the work done is reported on by the Board's Inspectors as satisfactory, that of all the larger schools is worthy of special praise. In these latter the upper boys have been organized into cadet companies, which are as efficient in their drill as many adult Volunteer companies, and the physical training of the girls and lower standards has also received its full share of attention.

ATTENDANCE.—The number on the roll at the end of the year shows an increase of 32 over that of the previous year, and the yearly average attendance (4,501) an increase of 57. The average attendance expressed as a percentage of the mean of the average weekly rolls for the four quarters was 88.2, the highest since the Board has been in existence. It is gratifying to be able to say that the attendance for the past year has been more regular than that for any previous year.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—The number of schools taking up this work continues to increase; and, indeed, there are few schools in the district in which some of the subjects provided for in the Act are not successfully taught. The amount of capitation earned during the year by the various