

August meeting Mr. McCallum was reappointed chairman of the Board. Twelve meetings of the Board were held during the year, with an average attendance of eight members.

SCHOOLS.—The number of schools in operation at the end of the year was sixty-nine, being an increase of one over the figures for 1907. Arrangements were made in one case for the conveyance of children by trap to and from school. In a few instances in the Sounds private arrangements were made for the conveyance of children by launch. The Roman Catholic and various other private schools in the district are also inspected and examined by the Board's Inspector. Considerable difficulty has again been experienced in obtaining qualified teachers for a number of the smaller schools; but this, to a certain extent, has been due not so much to the small salary available as to the isolated position of some of the places.

ATTENDANCE.—The average attendance for the year was 1,868, the figures for the four quarters being: March, 1,831; June, 1,858; September, 1,881; December, 1,900. The number on the roll at the 31st December was 2,163, being an increase of sixty-eight over the figures for 1907. The percentage of attendance for the year was 87·5—the highest yet recorded for the district; and the Board looks upon this as an indication of the increasing interest displayed by parents in the welfare of their children. The Truant Officer's figures for the year are: Number of informations, 27; convictions recorded, 20; cases withdrawn, 3; dismissed, 4. The amount of fines received during the year was £2 19s. 6d.

TEACHERS.—At the close of the year there were in the service of the Board twenty male teachers, sixty-eight female teachers, one male pupil-teacher, and five female pupil-teachers, making a total of ninety-four. Of the eighty-eight teachers, thirty are certificated, and three others hold licenses to teach. These figures show rather a small proportion of qualified teachers, and the Board is pleased to note that your Department is now offering further facilities for the training of suitable candidates.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.—During the year the following Saturday classes for teachers were held: Cookery, woodwork, agriculture, and dressmaking. The attendance at the classes was, on the whole, satisfactory. Just prior to the Easter holidays a special course of instruction was given in Blenheim, of which a large number of teachers availed themselves. In this connection the Board gratefully acknowledges the Department's assistance in the granting of railway passes and capitation, and the services rendered by the following lecturers: Mr. G. Hogben, M.A. (Inspector-General of Schools), Mr. J. S. Tennant, M.A., B.Sc., Dr. Bennett, Mr. D. A. Sturrock, Mr. James Bruce, and Miss Igglesden.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Every school provided some branch of physical instruction, and the military drill in the largest schools is reported as being of a high order.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The number of scholarships in force at the close of the year was fifteen, including three Junior National Scholarships. On the results of the examination held in December, twelve Board Scholarships, one Junior National Scholarship, and one private scholarship were awarded. The latter is a one-year scholarship of £25, given by Mr. John Duncan, M.P., who has generously offered to give a similar scholarship each year during his term as representative in Parliament for this district.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL.—Practically every school in the district is now taking some branch of handwork. Following is a list of the subjects taught: Cookery, woodwork, elementary agriculture, elementary physical measurements, swimming and life-saving, elementary physiology and first aid, needlework, modelling in plasticine, paperfolding, sticklaying, cardboard modelling, and bricklaying. Owing to the reduction of the capitation payable on cookery and woodwork classes, the Board has had to make a corresponding reduction in the salaries of the special instructors in these subjects. The attempt to conduct evening classes in connection with the Blenheim Technical School has had to be abandoned owing to the insufficient number of students offering.

BUILDINGS.—During the year new schools at Carluke and Spring Creek and a teacher's residence at Grassmere were erected. The buildings now in course of erection are: New school at Nydia Bay, additional class-room at Marlboroughtown, and teachers' residences at Tua Marina and Omaka. At the request of the Department, the Board took over the Maori schools at Wairau Pa and Waikawa Bay. The buildings at both places are very old, and were much dilapidated, but the Department furnished a small grant to enable the Board to effect improvements. The Board, as usual, spent a large sum in the maintenance of schools and residences, and also effected extensive improvements (costing, approximately, £200) to the school, furniture, and teacher's residence at Picton.

FINANCE.—The credit balance on all accounts at the 31st December was £679 16s. 11d., the balances on the separate accounts being: Administration, Dr., £51 0s. 8d.; teachers' salaries, Dr., £128 3s. 3d.; manual and technical, Dr., £152 18s.; training of teachers, Cr., £51 10s. 8d.; buildings, Cr., £960 8s. 2d. No account is taken here of contractors' deposits.

THANKS.—The Board desires to thank the members of School Committees generally for the helpful spirit of co-operation shown during the year.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

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R. McCALLUM, Chairman.