

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—The four district high schools in the district continue to do good work, though it is regretted that the Reefton and Motueka Schools receive such small support. The secondary division at Takaka, inaugurated in 1907, has fully justified its establishment, the number attending the division showing an average attendance for the year of twenty-two, giving ample evidence that the settlers in the Takaka Valley appreciate the advantages of higher education thus afforded them. The Westport School, too, is, considering the size of the town, fairly well supported. The average attendance for the year at each of the high schools was as follows: Westport, 39; Reefton, 15; Motueka, 15; Takaka, 22.

ATTENDANCE OF SCHOLARS.—It is gratifying to record a considerable increase in the number of children in attendance at public schools, the average roll-number for the year being 5,669, as against 5,542 for 1907. The average attendance recorded for 1908 was 4,868, being an increase of 186 on the average for the preceding year.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Adequate attention continues to be given to this important branch of instruction. Cadet corps or detachments are now established in connection with twenty-two schools.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—During the year the Board adopted the Junior National and Free-place Examination as the qualifying examination for Junior Scholarships. The results of the examination are published with the Inspectors' reports. The necessity for an amendment of the regulations governing the value of scholarships is again emphasized. The boarding fees at the Nelson Colleges are in excess of the maximum amount allowed by the Government as the value of a scholarship, with the result that parents of winners of scholarships are required to contribute towards the cost of board. It is suggested that the Department amend the regulations by fixing the maximum value of a scholarship at £45, which would, in this district at any rate, meet the difficulty.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS.—All the private schools in the district that have made application to the Board have, in accordance with the law, been inspected during the year. The Board notes with appreciation the fact that the Government has provided an additional inspection grant for this work.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL.—This branch of instruction has materially developed during the past year, and the appointment of the Director of Technical Schools has been the means of placing the Department more in line with the work carried out in larger centres. The Nelson Technical School is remarkably well attended, and the Board trusts that the engineering day school about to be commenced at Westport will prove of benefit in every way. The number of schools taking manual-training subjects continues to increase, elementary agriculture, woodwork, cookery, swimming, and physical measurements receiving special attention. The policy of securing (where possible) the services of efficient permanent instructors is proving advantageous in every way. A commodious laboratory was during the year added to the Nelson Technical School, and the erection of a technical school at Westport commenced. The Director's report will afford full details of the work carried on during the year.

BUILDINGS.—Though no very large contracts were let during the year, large amounts were paid on the Nelson Girls' School and Westport Brick School contracts, which were completed at the beginning of the year. New buildings, for which special grants were received, were erected at Hector (a side school to Granity) and at Takaka (an additional room for the secondary classes). The school at Rockville was rebuilt, and an enlargement was made of the Pigeon Valley School. The small school at Matiri was destroyed by fire, but the Board did not deem it necessary to rebuild, other suitable arrangements being made for carrying on the school-work. The building was very old, and was of small value. Particular attention has been given to the various requests made by Committees for grants for general repairs and upkeep of school buildings, with the result that the buildings have been well looked after, and at the same time the Board's funds have been administered with economy, consistent with efficiency. The rebuilding of some of the oldest school buildings will require the consideration of the Board during the present year.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION.—The buildings at present used for the Board's offices are now of advanced age, and show signs of considerable decay. The structure was one of the first school buildings erected in Nelson, and has served its purpose for many years. The building was erected in 1865, so that the question of providing suitable accommodation for its staff will require to occupy the attention of the Board at an early date. The development of the district and the advent of technical instruction has much increased the work of the permanent staff during the past two years, and the accommodation required for the efficient carrying-on of the work of administration cannot be much longer delayed.

The vacancy caused by the death of the late secretary, Mr. Stead Ellis, was filled by the promotion of Mr. Noman R. Williams, of the office staff, to the position.

FINANCE.—From the appended general statement of receipts and expenditure it will be noted that the Board ended the year with a credit balance on both General and Building Accounts.

THANKS.—The thanks of the Board are tendered to the various School Committees for the faithful and willing assistance rendered in the administration of the educational affairs of the district for the past year, and the Board has pleasure in placing on record the fact that the important duties intrusted to the Committees have been performed with the utmost assiduity by the Committees, and without friction with the governing body.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

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A. T. MACINNITY, Chairman.