

Education Board, and a decision was given against any interference with the discretion of the Board, with costs against the Institute. It would be of considerable interest to the Board to know how the Solicitor-General came to interpose in the case on the side of the Institute. Most folk would think that the authority of the Education Board would have been upheld by the Department, for there had never been any objection from the central authority to the course pursued in regard to this school for many years. Either the interpretation of the law by the Bench of Judges and the Board was wrong, or, in the eyes of the Education Department, the law required amending. It is impossible to believe that the Department and the Solicitor-General should not have been aware of the true legal position, and the only conclusion possible, therefore, is that the Department favours an amendment of the law curtailing the rights of the Boards in the direction contended by the Institute—a most unfortunate position.

FREE BOOKS.—The distribution of free books appears to have landed the smaller schools in interminable difficulties with respect to the grouping of classes. Reporting on this matter in March the Inspector said: "School-work has again been handicapped by the free-book difficulty. The Department allows one book (in the case of reading, two books) for each pupil in each class—on the face of it a very reasonable allowance. But the Department, in its syllabus, also allows classes to be grouped—nay, practically enjoins that certain classes shall be grouped. Hence you have a serious difficulty: if you group you cannot have a suitable book for each pupil, and if you do not group you cannot have efficient organization—at least, in schools of Grade IV and under. To obviate the difficulty double the present number of books should be supplied to these schools, and to that extent the grant should be doubled." At the close of last year the following recommendation was made: "During next year all pupils in schools below Grade IV should be grouped in reading as follows: Standard I and Standard II, in Standard I book; Standard III and Standard IV, in Standard III book; Standard V and Standard VI, in Standard V book. In the subsequent year the opposite arrangement would hold good, and so on, alternately. Unfortunately, owing to the limitation of the grant, this proposal could not be carried out. The Board is still of opinion that it would be much more to the interests of the community if the money spent on free school-books was diverted to the purchase of stationery and school requisites.

WANGANUI SCHOOL SITES ACT.—This Act was amended during the 1911 session of Parliament in the direction of giving the Board power to borrow a sum not exceeding £15,000 from the Public Trustee on the security of a first mortgage of the old Technical School site. The Board succeeded in securing the desired sum, and was thus enabled to continue the work of erecting the buildings provided for in the original Act. The Technical College buildings were completed some months ago. The Infants' School is well under way, and a contract was recently let for Board's offices.

MAINTENANCE GRANT.—The maintenance grant for the year was £6,082. This sum was found to be more proportionate to the Board's needs, and enabled a start to be made with the rebuilding of some of the older buildings.

FINANCE.—The annual statement of receipts and expenditure is attached.* The form in which this is now presented shows the balances or deficits on the individual accounts.

BUILDINGS AND SITES.—During the year the Mars Hill School was removed to Durie Hill, and a new room added; the Mosston School was shifted to a new site and the building enlarged and renovated. New residences were erected at Glen Oroua and Meremere. Additions were made to the schools at College Street, Wanganui East, Gonville, Taihape, Kaponga, Horopito, Rangatana, and to the residences at Tokaora, Kairanga, Mount View, Eltham, Manaia, Fraser Road, Waitotara, and Mangaweka. The District High School at Wanganui, and the teacher's residence at Hiwinui, both of which were destroyed by fire, were rebuilt. Contracts were let for new schools at Valley Road, Te Arakura, Orangimea, Umumuri, and Mangoiha, and for additions to the Moutoa School. A large amount of work, consisting principally of fencing, draining, and improving grounds, erection of shelter-sheds, repainting, repairs, &c., was done. A considerable portion of the work undertaken was carried out in a satisfactory and economical manner by the Board's foreman, in addition to which he supervised the majority of the works let by contract. The repainting of school-buildings has now, it is hoped, been placed on a satisfactory footing by the appointment of a foreman painter, who will in future carry out the whole of this important work. An additional area of land, towards the cost of which the Government made a grant and the residents subscribed, was secured at Gonville. The erection of bathrooms and wash-houses at a number of residences, for which purposes the Government has made a grant, will be appreciated by teachers. The Board owes its thanks to the Education Department for the consideration extended to its requests throughout the year.

OFFICIALS.—In conclusion, the Board again desires to place on record its high appreciation of the services rendered to the cause of education by the Chief Inspector (Mr. G. D. Braik), his fellow Inspectors, the Secretary to the Board (Mr. W. H. Swanger), and the staff, officials, and teachers generally, who have all shown an assiduity and a faithfulness in the performance of their duty worthy of the greatest praise.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

FRED. PIRANI, Chairman.

* See Appendix A, p. xxxii.