

awarded to those candidates who gain not fewer than 50 per cent. of the marks obtainable in that examination, and all pupils who do not so qualify, or who do not elect to take advantage of such free place should be required to attend at a continuation or technical or agricultural school, provided that attendance shall not be compulsory unless such school is within a radius of four miles for day and three miles for evening classes. In the case of schools approved by the Inspectoral Board of the education district, the head teacher should be allowed to "accredit" his pupils for free places at a high school, provided that this right may be withdrawn in the event of it being shown that the power of "accrediting" has been exercised injudiciously. The money saved by the abolition of scholarships should be expended in the direction of providing a further number of boarding-allowances for holders of free places residing in the country and compelled to live away from home in order to take advantage of their free places. It is further recommended that the parents of children entering upon a secondary-school course should be required to undertake that such children will attend regularly at the secondary school for a period of at least two years.

#### SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND PLAYGROUNDS.

Your Commission at each of the centres visited inspected as many schools as possible in order to note by personal observation the style of building, the method of lighting, ventilation, heating, sanitation, &c. In several districts, notably Auckland, Wanganui, and North Canterbury, the latest primary-school buildings are excellent in design, lighting, and ventilation, but a number of the schools were by no means up to the standard to be desired, especially when it is remembered that they were all large schools. To ensure improvement in this respect, your Commission suggests that the architects to the proposed five Education Boards should confer at regular intervals in order to consider and discuss matters relating to the design of school buildings. It is further suggested that all plans for proposed new buildings should be approved by the Health Department in regard to lighting, ventilation, &c.

In large schools, particularly in the southern districts where the climate is rigorous, it would be in the interest of economy to instal a central heating-system in place of the expensive and wasteful method of open fires.

In regard to school furniture, it was a matter of surprise to find that in some districts the old-fashioned long desks, together with forms without backs, accommodating as many as ten pupils, are still in common use. These should be replaced as soon as possible by dual or single desks.

Schools should not be used for such purposes as socials, dances, polling-booths, &c., where other suitable buildings are available.

The cost of installing sewerage at schools should be made a charge upon the New Buildings Account.

The neglect of the provision of playground accommodation at many of the city schools was forcibly impressed upon the Commission at all the large centres visited, and, as the health of the children should be the concern of the local authorities, it would be a wise thing to provide for assistance from them towards this object. In future, no grant should be given for the erection of a school unless at least four acres of land are available for the site.

#### CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOLS.

Much evidence was received in favour of what is known as the "consolidated school," the name by which the unit resulting from the union of two or more country schools is known. Consolidated schools have been established during recent years in many of the States of America and, coming nearer home, in New South Wales, in almost every case with the best possible results. From the report submitted by an Education Commission recently set up by the Legislature of Wisconsin, the following remarks on this subject are quoted,—

"The larger country school represents the chief need for the reform of rural education. The isolated, one-room country school is bound under the necessities of modern life to pass away. . . . The advantages of a consolidated school have been demonstrated in too many States