

work in chemistry, physics, and dairy science have been lacking. In each case the Board has endeavoured to obtain the necessary provision in the shape of suitable buildings and equipment. Its success, however, in this direction has not been commensurate with the importance generally understood to be attached to this subject. While the Board realizes that under existing circumstances there is need for economy in the expenditure of public funds, it desires to remind the Minister that the rural course must largely fail in its aims so long as adequate provision for practical instruction in the several branches of the work is not forthcoming.

Conveyance of Children and Board of Children.—The Board's expenditure on the conveyance of children to school, and on the board of children living a long distance from the nearest public school, was £1,589 18s. 6d., of which, under its present practice, the Department will refund £1,468 13s. The number of children conveyed to school has risen from 371 to 410, while boarding-allowance has been paid for fifteen children in respect of the last quarter of 1915.

Irregular Attendance.—In his annual report the Truant Officer states that during the earlier part of the year, and for several months up to September, the attendance was very good, the exceptions being few, but towards the latter part of 1915 sickness in various forms made its appearance, causing a serious decrease in attendance among the infants. One special feature, attributable, no doubt, to conditions brought about by the war, has been the unusual demand for children to fill positions in offices. In a number of cases Mr. Blank has been able to secure the children's return to school without taking Court proceedings, prosecutions to compel return having been necessary in three cases only. In dealing with applications for exemption the practice has been for the Truant Officer to make careful inquiries, and, if the circumstances warranted special consideration, to allow the parents a reasonable time. During the year the names of 2,380 children were sent in, and 1,803 ordinary notices and 165 of a final nature issued. Court proceedings were taken in forty-nine cases, in twenty-four of which fines were inflicted. Nineteen cases were adjourned, with the very best results, the attendance showing improvement in almost every case.

The Inspectorate.—While of opinion that the placing of the Inspectors under the direction of the Department was neither necessary nor desirable, the Board recognizes the valuable services rendered by the Inspectors, and would take this opportunity of expressing its indebtedness for the assistance and advice given by them during the year on matters coming within their province. But the Board is convinced that any further evidence of a desire for centralization will meet with general disapproval, and that the interests of education would be better served by endeavouring to strengthen the close and cordial relations that should exist, and happily have so existed in the past, between the governing body and all officers intimately connected with its administration.

School Committees.—The Board desires heartily to thank School Committees for the assistance rendered by them in the administration of the Act. In many cases those responsible for the local management of the several schools have raised large sums of money for the purpose of improving their school-grounds, and in this way have shown a resourcefulness and self-help beyond all praise, at the same time providing a valuable object-lesson as regards the possibility of making school-grounds both artistic and beautiful.

Incidental Allowances.—During the year the Board has continued its incidental allowances on the maximum scale, believing that such a policy was not only best calculated to stimulate local interest, but was also necessary in order to enable School Committees successfully to cope with the ever-increasing rise in the cost of labour and requisites. The Board's ability in the future to continue grants on the same scale will entirely depend on the funds placed at its disposal and the services to be performed.

The War.—The great war now raging, while lessening for a time the available teaching-power, has in several ways demonstrated the fine patriotism of which the members of the teaching profession are capable. A number of them from this district have joined the Expeditionary Forces now assisting the Motherland and her Allies in their hour of need. To the parents of those who have already paid the ultimate sacrifice the Board offers its heartfelt sympathy and condolence. The splendid response made by teachers and children in support of the many patriotic funds is further evidence of the common desire of one and all to be of some assistance in alleviating, as far as possible, the suffering and pain inseparable from so world-wide a conflict.

The Board's Staffs.—The Board desires to mark its appreciation of Mr. H. C. Lane, who for so many years has held the responsible position of Secretary. Mr. Lane has the complete confidence of the Board, which gratefully acknowledges his fine record of duties successfully and ably discharged. The thanks of the Board are also due in no small measure to the members of its office and other staffs for the satisfactory manner in which they have performed their arduous duties.

I have, &c.,

C. H. OPIE, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 22nd February, 1916.

I have the honour to submit, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, the annual report of the Education Board of the District of South Canterbury for the year ending the 31st December, 1915.

The Board.—At the beginning of the year the Board consisted of the following members: Messrs. J. S. Rutherford (Chairman), G. W. Armitage, W. M. Hamilton, C. S. Howard, William Lindsay, George Lyall, John Maze, G. J. Sealey, and Thomas Sherratt. Messrs. Maze and Lindsay, whose term of office