

## TARANAKI.

SIR,

New Plymouth, 11th March, 1920.

We have the honour to submit for the year 1919 the annual report on the public primary schools of the Taranaki Education District and on the private schools inspected.

During the year 153 public schools were in operation, and of these 150 were open at the end of the school year. Of the former number eighty-two were under the charge of sole teachers, and only two of these were combined as part-time schools. The private schools inspected number sixteen, with a total roll of 1,443. The following is a summary for the whole district of the numbers, according to classes, of the public schools:—

|                 |    |    |    |    | Number on<br>Roll. | Present at Annual<br>Examination. |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Standard VII .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 24                 | 22                                |
| „ VI ..         | .. | .. | .. | .. | 629                | 607                               |
| „ V ..          | .. | .. | .. | .. | 886                | 861                               |
| „ IV ..         | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,056              | 1,038                             |
| „ III ..        | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,230              | 1,196                             |
| „ II ..         | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,208              | 1,170                             |
| „ I ..          | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,305              | 1,259                             |
| Preparatory ..  | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3,811              | 3,634                             |
| Totals ..       | .. | .. | .. | .. | 10,149             | 9,787                             |

*Inspection*.—A third Inspector was engaged for nine months of the year. All parts of the district were visited. Owing to the necessity for assisting to counteract the effect of the premature closing of the schools in the previous year full visits were paid to the schools during the first half of the year.

*Conditions*.—The percentage of the average attendance for the year, based on the average roll number, was 90.2. This number shows a recovery from that of the previous year, and indicates that the attendance is acceptably regular in the district as a whole. There appears, however, to have been during the past year in a large number of school districts either an unfortunate amount of compulsory closing or much laxity in allowing casual holidays. This is evident when it is recorded that only five were open for a normal year of 410 half-days; twenty-seven others exceeded 400; ninety-six were open from 380 to 400; while twenty-five did not reach the lower of these figures. In some cases there may be adequate explanation. It is, however, imperative to emphasise the necessity for avoiding strain or, alternatively, weakness resulting from an undue shortening of the time devoted to the work of the school year.

Some discussion has been initiated on the question of promotion or change of location of a number of teachers, especially those occupying the position of head teachers of Grade IIIA schools. The number of these in 1919 was forty-eight, of IIIB schools eleven, and of schools of a higher grade fourteen. It is evident that Grade IIIA is for many teachers a “dead-end” where hope of promotion disappears, owing to great dearth of openings. This disability has been partly met by the substantial increase of salaries recently allotted. When the emolument and provision for residence reach a high standard the desire for advance will not be so great. Another factor is the desire for a change of scene. After spending a considerable number of years in one locality teachers often experience this feeling, which to some extent may be regarded as natural. This aspect can hardly, however, be taken into consideration in any way involving expenditure until other conditions of employment reach a degree of comfort that is everywhere recognized as reasonably demanded. In lower positions, on the contrary, there have been too many changes of teachers, especially of assistant teachers in country schools.

The work of the “sole teacher” and the amenities of the backblocks continue to present prominent features in the educational service of the district. The inexperience of a number of teachers is evident from the existence of 134 uncertificated adult teachers (*i.e.*, other than pupil teachers and probationers). This amounts to 46 per cent. of the adult teachers of the schools. A welcome innovation is the appointment of four organizing teachers, each placed in charge of from fifteen to twenty small schools. Although this took place only at the beginning of November, the teachers have already found cause to express hearty appreciation of the system. Assistance can now be rendered at the time it is needed and as frequently as the work of the school demands. As before, specimen schemes of work and specimen tests have been issued, and this will be continued, with the aid of the organizing teachers, during the coming year.

One condition of the country schools is found difficult to remedy. This is the failure in a number of cases to find board and lodging for the teachers. Moderation of expectation on the part of a few teachers and some sacrifice by residents will meet the difficulty to some extent; but where these fail it is evident some special provision is demanded. Unfortunately, owing to changing conditions, it is not easy to suggest the form of such provision. In one case, in another education district, a small movable dwelling has been constructed to be placed in the school-grounds or near an adjacent residence.

For uncertificated teachers, including sole teachers, assistants, pupil-teachers, and probationers, Saturday classes have been conducted, mainly with a view to enable them to prepare for examination. In August a special class was held for a fortnight, including a week forming the holidays at the end of the second term. The main subjects treated were hygiene, home science, practical agriculture, and drawing. Especially for teachers who were unable to take advantage of Saturday classes, correspondence classes were also arranged.

*School-grounds*.—Even in the smaller country schools much can be done to add to the appearance of the grounds without unduly interfering with the actual work of the school. In some instances Committees and teachers have shown a commendable spirit of co-operation and have interested themselves in organizing “working-bees,” with the result that paths have been formed, shrubs, shelter-trees, and hedges planted, and the grounds in many ways made more attractive. Moreover, in a few of these schools, in addition to the work entailed in the mere beautifying of the grounds, simple experiments have been successfully carried out in connection with gardening. In the larger schools