

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Office, Wanganui, 31st March, 1920.

I submit herewith a report on the progress of education in this district during the year 1919.

Board. There was no change in the personnel of the Board during the year. Messrs. F. Pirani (Chairman) and W. Bruce represented the Wanganui Urban Area, Messrs. L. R. Bryant and P. C. Freeth the Palmerston North Urban Area, Messrs. A. J. Joblin and J. J. Pilkington the North Ward, Messrs. E. F. Hemingway and W. A. Collins the West Ward, and Messrs. A. Fraser and H. McIntyre the South Ward. The Board was represented on other bodies as follows: Wanganui Girls' College Board of Governors, Messrs. F. Pirani, A. Fraser, and W. A. Collins; Palmerston North High School Board of Governors, Messrs. T. R. Hodder, P. C. Freeth, and J. A. Nash; Wanganui Technical College Committee, Messrs. W. Bruce and W. A. Collins. Mr. H. McIntyre was at the end of 1918 elected a member of the Committee of Advice of the Teachers' Training College, Wellington, as representative of the Wanganui, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, and Nelson Education Districts. He was re-elected at the end of last year.

Schools and Attendance.—New schools were opened at Pourangaki and Bell's Junction (Grade 0), Cook's Mill (Grade I), Mangaeturoa and Orangumea (Grade I) were reopened. The schools at Te Kumu, Tuapaka, Upper Kawhatau (Grade 0), Momohaki and Tiriraukawa (Grade I) were closed. At the close of the year there were open 202 main schools and four side schools, graded as follows: Grade 0, 15; Grade I, 65; Grade II, 30; Grade IIIA, 51; Grade IIIB, 12; Grade IVA, 9; Grade IVB, 2; Grade IVc, 3; Grade VA, 3; Grade VB, 2; Grade Vc, 2; Grade Vd, 1; Grade VIA, 1; Grade VIB, 1; Grade VIIA, 1; Grade VIIB, 2; Grade VIIC, 1; Grade VIIc, 1. The number of pupils on the roll at the close of the year was 15,445. Of these, 134 were in the secondary departments of the district high schools. The average attendance for the year was 13,984, which expressed as a percentage of the weekly roll number was 90.5, against 89.9 for the preceding year. As in 1918, the attendance was affected considerably by epidemics of influenza, &c. The Truant Officer paid 162 visits to schools. 118 informations were laid against parents, and convictions were recorded in the 95 cases proceeded with. During the previous year 304 informations were laid and 266 convictions recorded.

Teachers.—The number of adult teachers in the Board's service at the end of the year was 442. Of these, 151 were uncertificated, ten being in charge of Grade 0 schools, sixty-two in charge of Grade I, and fifteen in charge of Grade II. Fifty-five were assistants receiving salaries of Grades 1 and 2. The remaining twelve were teachers who were granted leave of absence to proceed on active service, but who had not resumed their school duties at the close of the year. The number of such teachers was sixteen. The probability is that some of them do not intend to resume teaching. There were ten male and forty-five female pupil-teachers, and three male and nineteen female probationers. The dearth of male applicants for appointment as pupil-teachers and probationers continues. At the beginning of the current year the Board was able to secure only six males, despite the fact that a substantial increase in the former rates of remuneration was made.

National Scholarships.—There were in force during the year thirty Junior and eighteen Senior Scholarships, of a total annual value of £1,044. On the results of the annual examinations scholarships were awarded to pupils of the following schools: Junior—Lytton Street, 1; Palmerston North High, 2; West End, 1; Taihape District High School, 4; Wanganui Convent, 1; Kawhatau, 1; Ore Ore, 1; Wanganui Marist Brothers, 1; College Street, 1; Wanganui Technical College, 2; Owango, 1; Utuwai, 1. Senior—Palmerston North High, 1; Wanganui Girls' College, 3; Feilding District High School, 1; Wanganui Collegiate, 1; and Wanganui Technical College, 1. It is pleasing to note that of the seventeen Junior Scholarships awarded, four were secured by country-school pupils.

Lieutenant Gray Scholarship.—Seventeen candidates competed for this scholarship. A pupil of West End School secured the highest marks, but as he elected to take up a Junior National Scholarship the Gray Scholarship was awarded to the next candidate on the list, a pupil of Terrace End School.

Alexander Scholarships.—A scheme for the award of scholarships from the Alexander Bequest was drawn up. It provides for the establishment of four scholarships with the object of encouraging promising senior pupils of the Wanganui Technical College to prosecute their studies with a view to becoming teachers of one of the following branches of education: Engineering, agricultural science, domestic science, and commercial subjects. The scholarship-holders, while still students on the roll of the senior classes, will assist for not more than three hours each day in teaching junior classes. The latter work will be comparable to the work done by probationers in the primary schools, and is not to interfere with the student's prosecution of his own studies. Each scholarship is of the value of £50, and is tenable for one year, with a possible extension to a second year. The awards are made on the recommendations of the Director of the Technical College after consultation with the Senior Inspector. The main object of the scholarships is to induce young people to enter upon a course of training for technical-school teaching. Four scholarships were awarded at the beginning of the current year.

Conveyance and Boarding Allowances.—During the year conveyance allowance was paid on account of 168 children in attendance at twenty-seven schools, and boarding-allowance on account of forty-eight children in attendance at twenty-three schools. The total amount expended was £601 15s. 6d. The Board is of the opinion that the allowances should be available not only for pupils attending the primary schools, but also for those in attendance at public secondary and technical high schools.

Voluntary Contributions.—£1,870 15s. 3d. was received by way of voluntary contributions towards the purchase of sites, improvements to buildings and grounds, and for the purchase of apparatus and library books. In addition, £188 6s. 3d. was received in aid of the maintenance of manual and technical classes. I take this opportunity of conveying to contributors the Board's thanks for their generosity.

Conferences.—Two members of the Board and the Secretary attended the Conference of Education Boards held in Wellington in September last. Many important proposals for the improvement of our system of education were discussed, and resolutions dealing therewith submitted for the Minister's consideration. It is satisfactory to know that several of these were favourably received and the suggestions adopted by the Department. In future a conference is to be held annually.

A conference of Education Board architects took place in March of the current year. This Board's architect attended. Such conferences must result in good, and it is hoped that in future an annual conference will be held.