

New Plymouth Technical School—Messrs. S. G. Smith, M.P. (resigned June, 1923), R. J. Deare, and P. J. H. White.

*Schools and Attendance.*—The number of schools under the jurisdiction of the Board at the end of the year was 167, with an aggregate average attendance of 10,173. The total roll number on the 31st December was 11,341, an increase of 220 pupils on last year.

Five new schools were opened during the year and one was temporarily closed.

*Teachers.*—The number of teachers in the Board's service on the 31st December, 1923, was 413 (men, 122; women, 291). These include fourteen male and seventy-eight female uncertificated teachers, and four male and nine female licensed teachers. It is pleasing to report that there continues to be less difficulty in obtaining suitable teachers for all classes of appointment. During the last month of the year 32 per cent. of the teachers engaged in schools, exclusive of pupil-teachers, probationers, and relieving teachers, were uncertificated. The majority of these have made an effort—more or less successfully—to qualify for the D certificate. The case of each uncertificated teacher was fully considered in November last, with the result that a number of the positions held by those who had made no effort to qualify were advertised.

*Buildings.*—Rather a large programme of building-works has been completed or carried out entirely during the past year. Three schools were completed early in the year, additions and remodelling were effected in several other cases, and four movable schools were erected. In addition to the above, thirty-three schools and twenty residences received painting, repairs, and general renovation. With very little exception the whole of the work was carried out by the Board's own staff.

*Workshop.*—The Board secured a new site for a workshop, and purchased from the Department the old Courtenay Street Infants' School, and removed this on to the new site. This building was altered and added to to suit requirements. The whole of the machinery and plant was removed to the new workshop, and the old workshop building was also removed on to the new site and used as a general store and storage for seasoned timber. The result is a very fine workshop.

*Finance.*—The credit balance brought forward from 1922 was £10,149 10s. 10d. The receipts from all sources were £125,699 6s. 7d.; the total expenditure in 1923 was £129,612 10s. 7d., leaving a credit balance on all accounts on 31st December, 1923, of £6,236 6s. 10d. The Rebuilding Fund is now reduced to £2,755 11s. 10d.

*Instruction Classes for Teachers.*—Saturday classes to enable all uncertificated teachers, pupil-teachers, and probationers to receive practical instruction in science and handwork subjects were conducted in Hawera, Stratford, and New Plymouth throughout the year. In all, ninety-eight students enrolled, and the attendance on the whole was commendable. In regard to the instruction given to pupil-teachers and probationers, my Board feels that great credit is due to the headmasters concerned for the very careful and efficient guidance of these young people's studies as demonstrated by the excellent examination results.

*Manual Training.*—Manual-training classes in woodwork and cookery were held at New Plymouth, Waitara, Inglewood, Stratford, Eltham, and Hawera. The aggregate roll number is—Cookery, 656; woodwork, 658; rural science, 220. The classes at Inglewood and Stratford were so arranged as to keep the country school-children visiting these centres fully engaged for four hours by alternate instruction in woodwork and rural science, cookery and domestic science (including needlework). Two conferences were held with the instructors with the object of attaining a satisfactory scheme of work in proper co-ordination with the other subjects in the syllabus. One of the chief difficulties the Board is encountering in respect to this instruction to country school-children is suitable methods of conveyance. There is a marked increase in the teaching of swimming throughout the district.

*Handwork.*—As prescribed by the syllabus, elementary handwork subjects were taught in all schools, and included such subjects as raffia and basket work, brushwork, cardboard-modelling, carton-work, toymaking, &c. About ten thousand pupils received instruction. Needlework has been taught in all schools, and eighteen instructors in this subject were appointed in sole-charge schools.

*Agriculture.*—The work still maintains a very satisfactory standard. Instructive displays of school-work have been exhibited at most of the agricultural shows, and indicate that both teachers and pupils are dealing with this subject with enthusiasm.

*School Libraries.*—There has been a marked increase in the establishment of school and class libraries during the year. Subsidies for the purchase of books, pictures, &c., were granted schools to the value of £175.

*Medical Inspection.*—The School Medical Officer reports having examined 4,152 children attending fifty-two schools. Parents are paying more attention to notified defects in children, and the general robust condition of pupils is particularly noticed in those schools where teachers by example and precept teach the everyday rules of health.

*Truancy and Irregular Attendance.*—The general regularity of attendance at schools in this district is satisfactory. The number of children in receipt of conveyance and boarding allowances (173) does not altogether represent the difficulties of administering a scattered district where often, owing to the nature of the climatic conditions and the state of the back roads, the children are an hour, and in several cases two hours, distant from school. In the course of his duty the Attendance Officer has paid 243 visits to schools, and found it necessary to investigate twenty-seven cases through the Court for infringements of the Education Act.

*School Committees.*—The Board wishes to record its appreciation of continued harmonious relations existent with School Committees generally. The valuable assistance they continue to render in the administration of education is manifested in the very large amount distributed in subsidies for the improvement of buildings, grounds, and internal equipment of the schools—viz., £1,535.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

A. LEES, Chairman.