

school-grounds are not only a source of pride to the children, but a feature of the district and an attraction to the visitor or the passer-by. The Agricultural Club movement has been reorganized in this district, with control in an executive on which both the Board and the Department of Agriculture are represented. The Board now looks forward to a successful extension of the movement.

Woodwork Classes.—At the beginning of the year the Board provided tools to five selected teachers for the establishment of light woodwork classes in Grade III schools. The Inspectors report that the work undertaken provides a valuable extension of the handwork facilities, and that the experiment is fully justified. It is regretted that through shortage of funds no extension of this work can be undertaken in the meantime.

Conveyance and Consolidation.—The annual increase in the cost of conveyance is brought about principally by the steady progress that is being made in the consolidation of schools and by the establishment of conveyance services in place of building new schools. As an offset against this increase, there are considerable savings for teachers' salaries, Committee grants, and buildings, both at the small schools closed and where the establishment of a school has been rendered unnecessary. The Board does not think there is much to be gained in the combining of two small schools, and it proposes to direct its efforts to the conveyance of pupils from small schools to existing district high schools, or to central schools which could be raised to that status by reason of the influx of conveyed children. The time is not opportune to push consolidation schemes which would mean new buildings or additions, and there is the further reason that the closing of more schools would add to the number of teachers out of work.

School Committees.—Notwithstanding occasional protests against the curtailment of their functions—particularly in the appointment of teachers—most Committees now appreciate the fact that there is an immense amount of useful work for them to do. It may be said that the younger generation of Committeemen now in evidence know nothing of the days when Committees could make a selection from a list of applicants, and they accept the present method as a matter of course. Every year sees an increase in the number of Committees turning their attention to the never-ending work of improving the school surroundings. The withdrawal of subsidies has made the position difficult for Committees, particularly those with works in progress. The Board trusts that the Government will be able to meet all claims for subsidies actually in the hands of the Department or the Boards at the time the decision to withdraw was arrived at. The Board also urges the lifting of the condition requiring claims to be made within twelve months of the receipt by the Committee of a voluntary contribution in respect of all money raised during the year 1930. It is to be hoped that the withdrawal of subsidies will not be prolonged unduly, as this would tend to damp the enthusiasm now evident for improving the school environment and adding to the comfort of the children. There is the further aspect that many Committees cannot meet their liabilities without the assistance of subsidies, and the loss of the fuel subsidy, in particular, is a serious item. The Board is satisfied, however, that all Committees will do their best to make ends meet until better times return.

SOUTHLAND.

(Chairman, Mr. J. C. THOMSON.)

Consolidation of Schools.—In last year's report the Board was pleased to record that five schools had been closed owing to their being consolidated with larger schools in their neighbourhood. The results have proved in every way satisfactory, and the parents concerned would not willingly go back to the old order of things. In the period covered by this report two additional schools were closed—viz., Northope and Riverside—the former being consolidated with Lochiel and the latter with Dipton. In other districts the matter is being seriously considered, and there is every likelihood that at no distant date other cases of consolidation will be in operation.

Attendance.—It is worthy of notice that the very high percentage of attendance recorded for the year constitutes a record for this district. This excellent result can, no doubt, be accounted for by the fact that during the year the district was free from any serious epidemic affecting regularity of attendance. A contributing factor also is the improved facilities now available for getting children regularly to school where consolidation schemes are in operation.