

## CANTERBURY.

(Chairman, Mr. G. W. ARMITAGE.)

*Schools.*—During the year a school was opened at Craigmere, while those at Longbeach, Spotswood, Waitohi Flat, Evans Creek, Ataahua, Gebbie's Valley, Motukarara, and Newland were closed, leaving 375 open at the end of the year.

*Consolidation.*—Consolidation of schools was effected at Cheviot, Temuka, and Tai Tapu, in the last-mentioned case three schools being closed. The whole question of conveyance, which in Canterbury has grown very extensively during the past few years, was given a thorough revision, and many services were cut out or curtailed to such an extent as to bring the cost within the region of the ordinary capitation rates payable for individual conveyance. This curtailment caused considerable hardship in many cases, particularly as the economic condition of the country people made it very difficult for them to contribute anything to the services as had hitherto been the case. The growing demands on the Board's diminishing General Fund also accentuated the difficulty, and prevented any subsidies being paid to the services that were likely to be restricted or stopped altogether.

*General.*—The year has been a difficult one in many respects, and while the Board has been sorry to see the curtailment or cessation of so many desirable services it has recognized that those responsible for the administration of the Dominion's finances have been compelled to effect economies in all possible directions.

## OTAGO.

(Chairman, Mr. J. WALLACE.)

*Probationers.*—No probationers were appointed at the end of the year. Three reasons may be advanced for the Government's decision—economy, the present surplus of teachers, and the smaller percentage of wastage during the period of the depression. If, as appears probable, no probationers are appointed next year, very many young people preparing for the teaching profession will be faced with a serious position. Many with higher leaving certificates are already marking time. If some of the best of these could be selected and given two years' work as probationers at a small rate of salary, it would retain for the teaching profession good material which might otherwise drift into blind avenues; £1,500 spent in this way might prove a very good investment for the country.

*Efficiency of Schools.*—The Inspectors' estimate of the general efficiency of the schools is as follows: Very good to excellent, 18 per cent.; good, 42 per cent.; very fair, 34 per cent.; fair, 5 per cent.; weak, 1 per cent.

*Elementary Agriculture.*—The Inspectors state that "Where the teacher is really interested, the gardens are very attractive." It would be too much to expect that every young teacher leaving the Training College should be an agricultural and gardening enthusiast, and it is just here that the agricultural instructors, with their specialized knowledge, and a measure of tactful encouragement, prove their usefulness by securing the co-operation of teachers in attaining and maintaining the desired standard of efficiency. In a country which must develop primarily along the lines of agricultural and pastoral industry, it is only right that agriculture and science should form an essential part of the general education of all pupils. Although agriculture and science are recognized as equal in educational value with other subjects of the school course, this recognition does not always find adequate expression in practice, and in the absence of the personal influence of a skilled instructor the standard of work, the Board believes, would inevitably suffer.

*School-grounds.*—Ground-improvement on a subsidy basis is at a standstill, but many Committees are making judicious use of labour under the No. 5 Scheme. In every case the work has been in the nature of a permanent improvement, and in many instances its scope has been such that it could not otherwise have been faced for many years. In Dunedin and vicinity particularly effective work has been carried out at Anderson's Bay, Concord, Green Island, Mosgiel, North-east Harbour, Tainui, Wakari, and Walton; while further afield Oamaru South, Palmerston, and Maheno may be mentioned.

*Special Schools and Classes.*—It is unfortunate that there are always children coming forward to keep the rolls of these schools full. While very little can be done for some of the backward children, their lot in a more congenial atmosphere is made happier. A special class was opened in Oamaru at the beginning of the year. The School Medical Officer, reporting on the Sara Cohen Open-air School for physically defective children, states that all the children have made material health advancement, and that, despite the severe winter, the doors were completely closed on only two or three occasions; while even on snowy days there were no complaints as to feeling the extreme cold. At the class for speech defects, children who appear to be incurable are being taught how to speak, and it is worthy of note that some of these children, regarded as mentally defective, are found, on being provided with the outlet of speech, to be quite normal children.

## SOUTHLAND.

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

*Schools.*—The number of schools in actual operation at the beginning of 1931 was 185. Of these schools three were closed during the course of the year on account of reduced attendance—viz., Lora Station, Walter Peak, and Port Craig. As no new schools were established, the number at the end of the year was therefore 182.

*Attendance of Pupils.*—The record made last year in respect of percentage of attendance has been broken, and a new record established with the percentage raised from 91 to the very high figure of 92.4. To attain to such an excellent percentage it goes without saying that the district did not suffer from any serious epidemic during the year. It goes to indicate also that the much-maligned climate of Southland is very far from deserving the unfavourable terms often applied to it by residents of other districts.

*Woodwork and Cookery.*—Classes in these subjects were held regularly throughout the year at the Board's six manual-training centres. The two centres in Invercargill were open continuously, Gore and Riverton for three days per week, and Winton and Wyndham for two days per week.