

## MANUAL-TRAINING CENTRES.

221. Certain manual-training centres (situated mainly in country districts) are being conducted at considerable expense, and pupils are being gathered together from surrounding schools and conveyed to the centres at a high cost, either by rail or road. There are, however, a large number of country school pupils who are at present unable, on account of distance, to receive annual training at these centres and in lieu thereof are given handwork instruction by the ordinary teachers. We consider that the expensive country manual-training centres might well be closed, and recommend accordingly. The effect would be to require the ordinary school staff to provide handwork instruction as is done in the cases of the other country schools referred to. There should be little, if any, loss of efficiency if this were done.

Estimated saving, £5,000.

## CONVEYANCE OF SCHOOL-CHILDREN.

222. The State is at present providing free conveyance to pupils of primary, secondary, and technical schools, and this service is costing the Dominion approximately £118,000 per annum. This enormous expenditure is unwarranted, and immediate steps should be taken to reduce the amount to more reasonable proportions. There is little to be said for the State shouldering the burden of conveying children to school unless there is an advantage to be gained, say, by the avoidance of the expense of establishing a new school of at least Grade I.

223. The practice has grown up of making allowances varying from 4d. to 8d. per return trip on account of children under ten who are living two miles from school, and older children who are living three miles from school.

224. Payments are made in many cases to parents where, say, a horse or vehicle is provided by the parents for the conveyance of the children to school, and in other cases road or rail transport is paid for.

225. Free railway tickets are issued under certain restrictions to pupils desiring to attend secondary and technical schools, and also to children desiring to attend private schools.

226. In some instances in lieu of a conveyance allowance the sum of 5s. per week is allowed towards the board of school-children living away from home.

227. We must direct particular attention to the rapidly increasing cost of these services, as we are of the opinion that such an elaborate system of transport is unnecessary and altogether beyond the resources of the country.

228. We recommend—

- (1) That free conveyance to all post-primary schools be discontinued.

The cost under this heading is £15,000 for children attending secondary and technical schools. We consider that parents of children attending secondary and technical schools should meet the transport cost themselves, particularly as post-primary education is free.

- (2) That boarding-allowances be discontinued, and that the pupils be taught through the Department's Correspondence School.

The Correspondence School is particularly well organized, and adequate instruction can be given to country pupils through this medium.

- (3) That the conveyance allowance at present paid for primary-school children be discontinued, except where a conveyance system is instituted for the express purpose of saving the expense of establishing a new school of at least Grade I or reopening an old one.

229. These changes would not affect any consolidation system that has been established, and the consolidation of small schools should certainly be carried out wherever any saving can be effected thereby.

Estimated saving on conveyance of children, £50,000.

## CLOSING OF SMALLER PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

230. We have considered the possibility of effecting economies by the closing of the smaller primary schools—that is, Grade O schools. These have an average attendance of from one to eight, and they require the services of one teacher. The average cost of teaching pupils in these schools is £15 per pupil as against £10 15s. 6d. per pupil for all primary schools. Children attending these schools could, without detriment to themselves, receive instruction through the Correspondence School conducted by the Department. The average cost of teaching children in that school is approximately £6 per head, so that a saving of £9 per head would result.

231. The value of the instruction provided by the Correspondence School has been amply demonstrated during the ten years in which it has been in operation, and we are convinced that the pupils would receive adequate training under this system. In Victoria the Economy Committee which recently considered educational expenditure recommended the closing of all schools with a roll of ten or less.

Estimated saving by closing all Grade O schools, £12,600.

## OVER-SCALE SALARIES PAID TO TEACHERS.

232. By section 79 (7) of the Education Act, 1914, a teacher's salary is maintained at over-scale rates when the attendance at a school falls. In the case of primary-school teachers the over-scale salary is maintained in some cases indefinitely, and in other cases for five years unless the teacher has been offered a transfer, in which case the period is considerably less. The principle of paying over-scale rates seems to be reasonable provided that payment is not unduly protracted. It should, however, be sufficient to maintain the salary for one year only, as this should afford the teacher an opportunity of securing another position. We recommend that the period be limited to one year, and that those teachers who have drawn over-scale salary for a period of one year or more be notified that the payment will henceforth be discontinued.

Estimated saving, £3,000.