

Instructors met in conference at Hawera early in the year and arranged definite courses of work ; and in May they attended a conference convened by your Department in Wellington. They returned gratified and stimulated by the frank exchanges of experiences and of ideas for the advancement of various aspects of school work in agriculture, dairy science, and nature-study.

A number of School Committees have sought plans for ground improvements, and many schools are establishing varieties of native plants in their nurseries in preparation for the Centenary functions of tree-planting.

The total entries in all the projects offered by the executives of the agricultural clubs to pupils was over two thousand, excluding pig club entries and bee clubs. In many schools interest appears to have been quickened by the formation of school clubs, which furnish reports of their activities to the general executive. Practical agriculturalists such as local farmers and officers of the Agriculture Department have given addresses, and the local press has consistently given in full lengthy reports and details of the club competitions.

Conveyance of Pupils.—Approximately five hundred children were conveyed to school in Government buses or contract service buses, and, in addition, about six hundred pupils were paid the prescribed conveyance allowance, so that approximately 10 per cent. of the school population is now being conveyed to school by motor-vehicles. Twenty-nine pupils were in receipt of the prescribed boarding-allowance.

Ground Improvements.—An extensive amount of valuable work has been carried out during the year towards permanent improvements to school-grounds.

Uneven and unusable surfaces have been excavated and levelled, and are now converted into valuable playing-areas. Asphalt and concrete falling-in squares and basketball areas have been laid down, and many schools have received valuable help for this work through the Public Works Department.

Your influence in making such work possible is greatly appreciated.

Health and Physical Education.—Towards the end of the year the Health Department completed arrangements for the supply of milk to schools in the New Plymouth area. The organization appears to be completely satisfactory in all respects.

My Board works in complete accord with the Health Department, and thanks the School Medical Officer, Colonel Dawson, and his officers for much valuable advice and assistance.

WANGANUI.

(Chairman, Mr. E. F. HEMINGWAY.)

Efficiency of the Schools.—The Board is indebted to the Inspectors for their very useful report on the year's work. It is printed in full at the end of this report.

The table showing the Inspectors' assessment of the general efficiency of the schools indicates a pleasing increase in the standard of work. For 1937 schools classified "Very Fair" or better were 96.9 per cent. of the total, as compared with 93.8 per cent. for the previous year.

The "Very Good" and "Excellent" groups also showed an increase of 3.1 per cent., these schools now representing 17.2 per cent. of the total.

The foregoing results are particularly creditable when it is remembered that schools did not open until 1st March and that several schools were closed for varying periods through infantile paralysis. The Board records its thanks to all teachers whose work helped to raise the general standard of efficiency.

It is pleasing to note the reference by the Inspectors to the valuable work carried out by the secondary departments of the district high schools. The Board feels that the good work accomplished in these departments is not sufficiently known and appreciated by many country parents. These departments were established to give country children facilities for secondary education, and it is only by the whole-hearted support of the country parents that an efficient system can be provided. As pointed out by the Inspectors, it is very difficult to provide liberal courses in small secondary departments. Increased roll numbers mean increased staffing and greater efficiency.

The policy of consolidation on district-high-school centres will no doubt be the means of encouraging a fuller use of secondary facilities.

School Environment.—Commendable interest has again been evinced in this matter by School Committees and teachers. Subject to the limits of its finances, the Board is always pleased to assist Committees which can bring forward suitable schemes representing a fair measure of local initiative and practical support.

Teachers.—The number of full-time teachers employed at the end of the year was 511, an increase of one over 1936.

The Board is indebted to the Board of Studies and the Principal for reports on the work and progress of the students from this district. Personal contact with the students was also established by a visit to the college by the Senior Inspector, accompanied by two senior Headmasters.

School Committees.—No report of the Board would be complete without recording its recognition of the most useful services rendered by the members of School Committees throughout the whole of the district.

In accordance with the Board's usual policy, official visits were made to many schools, and in all cases there was ample evidence of keen local interest in the schools. The Board is very fortunate in