



NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

(PROVINCE OF TARANAKI.)

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Provincial Secretary's Office

New Plymouth, December 16, 1867.

NOTICE is hereby given that the following Tenders have been accepted by the Provincial Government:—

For Painting Provincial Hospital—
Stephen Madden, 1s. 4d. per square yard.

Fencing at Mount Eliot—
Samuel Curtis, 5s. 6d. per chain.

Internal Painting, Provincial Hospital—
M. E. Harris, £5.

Ironwork, Waiwakaiho Bridge—
Thompson & Wotherspoon, bands, 5d. per lb.; plates, 15s. each; altering bolts, 7s. 6d. each.

For grubbing Furze, Town Runs—
William Nichols, £4 per acre.

For grubbing Furze, &c.—
John Ahirn, £18.

Repairing Ford, Mangoraka—
Tunncliffe & Holyroyd, £6 10s.

For Fencing Provincial Hospital—
W. and D. Nichols, 21s. per chain.

For taking down a House at St. Germain's Square and re-building at Omata—
Israel Pellew, £14.

For cutting, grubbing, and burning Furze on Educational Reserve, 45 acres—
J. Healey, £10.

T. KELLY,
Provincial Secretary.

Provincial Secretary's Office,
New Plymouth, December 16, 1867.

THE following Tenders have been received for the construction of a Bridge over the Mangoraka, Devon line:—

R. Rundle £279.
W. Smaller 290.
J. Brooking 298.

R. Rundle's Tender accepted.

T. KELLY,
Provincial Secretary.

Superintendent's Office,

New Plymouth, December 19, 1867.

THE following letter and Report from Mr. R. H. Eyton, who has been recently appointed Inspector of Schools receiving Government aid in the Province of Taranaki, are published for general information, and the attention of all persons interested in promoting education in the Province is respectfully invited thereto.

H. R. RICHMOND,
Superintendent.

New Plymouth, December 9, 1867.

SIR,—In accordance with the instructions conveyed to me in your Honor's letter of the 2nd October, I beg to forward herewith my half-yearly Report of the condition of the Schools in this Province receiving Government aid, together with certain recommendations for their better organisation, which I hope will receive your Honor's most earnest consideration.

I cannot lay too much stress on the great necessity which exists for a revision of the regulations at present in force as to the distribution of the Government aid, for a more efficient system of supervision and control, and generally for the adoption of any measures whereby the indifference of parents to the education of their children may be diminished, and the numbers attending the various Schools, in the town as well as the country, increased.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
ROBERT H. EYTON,
Inspector of Schools.

His Honor the Superintendent,
Taranaki.

REPORT AS TO THE CONDITION OF THE
SCHOOLS IN THE PROVINCE OF TARA-
NAKI, RECEIVING GOVERNMENT AID.

During the past two months, I have visited the various schools in this Province receiving aid from the Government, with the exception of the Patea and Manutahi schools, and have examined the children attending, in reading, writing, and arithmetic. I much regret that the result of these examinations should have been so unsatisfactory as I have to report. I found that the large majority of children had no real knowledge of that which they were supposed to have learned, and were unable to answer questions unless put in precisely the same form and order as that to which they had been accustomed. For instance, some of the children considered most advanced by their teachers, were quite unable to repeat the multiplication table except just as it is printed, and in several cases after hearing a reading lesson, I found the pupils could not tell me anything of what they had been reading. In the same way in spelling, the lesson for the day was usually well learned and repeated, but as I went back through the lessons of one, two, or three days before, I found the answers become less and less accurate, until at last they were the merest guess work; the children had no idea of the sound of the letters, and could spell no word, as a general rule, which they had not learned. This state of things must in the main be attributed to the perfunctory manner in which the teacher explains the tasks to the children, and which is owing to the want of training, rather than the want of will. My conclusion is, that generally speaking the education which is being given at the Government Schools is not such as to develop successfully the intelligence of the scholars, or give any grounds for the expectation that they will ever feel an interest in and of their own accord endeavour to prosecute, their studies after they have acquired a sort of knowledge of reading, writing, and ciphering; on the contrary, I think it is far more probable that three-fourths of the children will in a very short time forget the little they had learned. I should mention that these faults are not nearly so apparent in the schools which are regularly and frequently visited by persons interested in their well-being: such are the Roman Catholic and Infant Schools, the former of which I consider on the whole to be in a better

condition than any of the others. While the instruction given in the most elementary branches is so exceedingly unsatisfactory, as I have said, it is of course out of the question to expect that the children should be acquainted with anything beyond.

I believe the state of things above described, is the almost necessary consequence of the very irregular manner in which the children attend school. It is scarcely fair to judge solely by the past quarter, as the prevalence of measles in the town and its vicinity has no doubt kept away many who would otherwise have come; but from what I gather from the teachers, I am led to infer that there is very great irregularity at all times, more especially in the country districts. In some cases this quite prevents the division of the school into classes, and in all it is a very great obstruction. The teacher has in consequence to hear each child separately, and has therefore no time to see that the pupil thoroughly understands the lesson, or to explain it as fully as it should be explained. The number of children receiving Government aid is as follows:—

	Above 10 years old.	Below 10 years old.	Total.
In the town	66	108	174
In the country	17	24	41
	83	132	215

A considerable number of these do not attend often enough to derive any practical benefit, and in some instances where there were two or more children in one family I found that they attended alternately, and that while the parents only paid the fee for one child, the Government was paying for all. The teachers state that they are unable to insist on the attendance being more regular, as the result of remonstrance is frequently to cause the parents to remove the children altogether.

There are also a great many children who do not go to school at all, but I am not able even to form a conjecture as to their number, and only know that such is the case from the statement of the different teachers. When the census returns are published, it will be possible to ascertain the number of these children pretty accurately.

It is not easy under such unfavourable circumstances to form a judgment as to the competence of the teachers in the different schools, but it would be highly surprising to anyone to find really good teachers in schools where so little encouragement is offered, and where the whole income of the master is scarcely as much as he would be able to earn if he were a labouring man. The Messrs. Earl alone have had any previous experience in teaching. In all the schools I believe the teachers are diligent and painstaking, but that from want of training they absolutely do not know how to convey their instructions so as to awaken the intelligence and interest of the children. As long as this is the case, it is impossible that rapid progress should be made, and although the want of good teachers arises in the first instance from the bad attendance, and small inducement offered, it undoubtedly reacts on the attendance, and parents seeing how very slowly the children advance, come to think it is scarcely worth while to send them at all. That this is really the case, is evident from the fact that the best attended and most successful school in town is one which is receiving no Government aid. I do not think that the ill-success of the Government Schools arises from an absolute want of knowledge on the part of the masters, and mistresses, so much as from an incapability of putting what they know in a form comprehensible

to the children; and I do not consider that this obstacle can be entirely overcome until the schools are taught by persons who have had some previous training. The power of illustrating and explaining in a simple and forcible manner must be acquired before a teacher is fit for his work, and I can find but little evidence in the schools I visited to show that the teachers here possess this power to any extent.

The school buildings in town are in a sufficiently good condition, and are quite large enough, but I think more attention should be given to roof ventilation; ~~the same thing may be said of the~~ new school-room at Bell Block. The room used for the school at Oakura is far too small and close to be healthy. The Omata room is large enough for present requirements. All the schools should be provided with a black board, without which a master can scarcely teach a class. The supply of books is very inadequate, and those in use do not seem to me to be the best that could be obtained. The parents are unwilling to buy books for their children.

To sum up, my opinion of the present condition of the Government schools is very unfavourable, and any comparison which may be instituted between them and the schools for the poorer classes at home must, according to my judgment, be altogether to the advantage of the latter. The attendance is very bad, and it is the interest of the teacher not to insist on greater regularity, in order that there may be a large number of children on the books, from whom he can get Government aid, and thus compensate himself for the deficiency in collection of his fees from parents. The income is so small that it is out of the question to expect to obtain good teachers. From these two causes combined the schools necessarily suffer—children derive very little good, and the Government aid is to a great extent wasted.

I find by a return furnished to me by the Assistant-Treasurer that the Government is at present giving ~~£571 7s. 6d. per annum as aid to the~~ various schools, of which £183 17s. 6d. is given to schools in the town, as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Miss A. Smith	21	0	0
Miss M. A. Shaw	34	15	0
Mr. A. R. N. Earl	43	5	0
Mr. W. H. Earl.....	21	5	0
Catholic School.....	37	12	6
R. Hart.....	26	0	0

£183 17 6

The total number of children receiving aid is 174, of whom 66 are above ten years old. I think it is improbable that the attendance will ever sink below this number, as the late stagnation of trade and want of employment for labour are almost sure to have reduced the number of children attending school to the minimum. It may reasonably be expected that the population will in future increase rather than decrease, and the numbers at school will consequently be proportionately augmented. But at present I think the number of town schools is too many for any to be in a good condition. One teacher should be able to instruct fifty children, nor could he get a living from a school at which the attendance fell far short of this. I understand that Mr. W. H. Earl and Mr. Hart are likely to give up their schools at the end of the year. I would recommend that the Government should withdraw its aid from these two schools, whether given up or not, and that Mr. W. H. Earl should be offered the first vacancy which may be at the disposal of the Government. This would reduce the number of schools to four. In these I would recommend

the following alterations: (1). That Mr. A. R. N. Earl's school be considered a boy's school, and no Government aid given for any girls attending: (2). That Miss Shaw's school be considered a girl's school, and no Government aid given for any boys attending: (3). That Miss Smith's and Miss Lynch's schools be considered infant schools: (4). That in the two former schools Government should not aid children under nine years old, and in the two latter schools above nine years old. By this means that classification which I look upon as so necessary to efficiency would be in ~~some measure at once introduced~~; and the teachers in the upper schools would not have to devote the greater part of the time which should be given to more advanced pupils, to the troublesome work of teaching the alphabet and figures to mere beginners. I have made the division of age between the infant and upper schools at nine years' old, partly for the purpose of equalizing the numbers in the different schools, but principally because those who have been in attendance at the Infant School for two years, should by that time be sufficiently advanced for the upper schools; the division would more properly be made at eight years' old, but at present this would so diminish the numbers at the Infant schools, as to make it improbable that teachers would be found to take them.

The difficulties to be encountered in placing the country schools on a satisfactory footing are far greater than in the case of the town, where the numbers are actually sufficient to support four schools. The only suggestion which I have to make as to the district schools specially (until the education fund can be largely increased), is that there should be a reserve of several acres set apart in each district for the use of the teacher, who has a good deal of leisure time under the existing system, and might by cultivating this land add considerably to his income.

The recommendations which I have to make ~~affecting the town and country schools alike~~ will come under the three heads,—regularity of attendance, competence of teachers, and system of management.

With regard to attendance, before speaking of means for improving the regularity, I should state that there are a large number of children in the Province who are attending no school at all, but that until the census returns are published, I am unable to say exactly what this number is. I can see no means of reaching parents who are indifferent to the education of their children, as long as the present system continues; but as I am convinced that the large majority of those who neglect to send their children do so, not from apathy but from inability, I believe that this evil will gradually die out as the country becomes more populated, and the district schools more frequent, but until this is the case there appears to be no remedy.

I believe the regularity of attendance of the children who are within reach of a school might be improved by substituting for the present capitation grant on attendance, a grant according to the result of an annual examination; the standards to be carefully devised so as to vary with the age of the children. This would take away from the teachers the power of increasing their schools numerically, and thus obtaining more Government aid than they are entitled to, by allowing irregularity of attendance. I think moreover that if the number of holidays were largely increased, a great improvement would result therefrom. The following extract from the report of the English Education Commission of 1862, bears upon this subject:—"Before

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dismissing this part of the subject (the state of juvenile labour as affecting attendance at school), we must call attention to the important evidence as to the number of hours during which children can be usefully kept in school, and the length of time for which their attention can be sustained. The evidence on the whole tends decidedly to the conclusions:—(1). That for children under the age of twelve years, twenty-four hours a week is nearly the limit of profitable instruction in studies requiring mental effort; (2). That eighteen hours a week is often a period of more useful mental effort than twenty-four; (3). That fifteen hours a week, the utmost that is obtained by factory children, is, to use the most unfavourable term, not insufficient; (4). That much may be done in twelve hours a week, or two hours a day, provided that those two hours be two fresh hours in the morning; (5). That children who have been educated up to the age of seven in a good infant school, can be taught in three years in a school attendance of from fifteen to eighteen hours a week, to read well, to write well, and to understand the common rules of arithmetic. The number of school hours is five in most of the schools in this Province, for five days in the week. Supposing the daily hours were from nine to twelve, and attendance were required on Saturday, the whole number of school hours in the week would be eighteen, the number to which the Commissioners appear most favourable for children under twelve. I think that in case of the Government being disposed to allow the half time system, the above division of time should be introduced into the Infant schools, but in the case of the older children the time should be so divided as to render their leisure from school of most value to the parents for purposes of labour, and this will in my opinion be best effected by allowing absence from school for three days in the week, and raising the number of school hours to six on each of the remaining three days. The Commissioners did not recommend the adoption of the half time system, because they considered that great numbers of the parents who felt they were paying for a full day's schooling, would probably become discontented with the schools. This, however, scarcely applies to the schools here, where the Government pay for half the schooling, and have therefore a right to enforce such regulations as will render it more useful. I believe, moreover, that the alteration would be looked upon by most parents as a great relief. I am hardly prepared to recommend the plan, as I know of no instance in which it has been tried, but at present I can see no great objection to it, and believe it would greatly improve the condition of the schools.

The next point for consideration is how to obtain competent teachers. I have before stated my opinion that no teacher is properly qualified who has not received a special training of at least one year's duration—in England three are required). This is, however, quite out of the question in Taranaki, until the salaries can be increased. Mr. Taylor, the Inspector of Schools in Auckland, recommends examination, but I do not think that any mere examination would touch the difficulty, as a person cannot be examined in his power of imparting knowledge. I think the Government should make every effort to keep those teachers here who have had any previous experience, such as Mr. W. H. Earl, and should

only give schools to persons not so qualified, on the express understanding that they were not to look upon themselves as permanently appointed, or to have any claim for compensation in case of their removal in favour of some other applicant. Something might be done by addressing a circular of instructions to the various teachers, but constant visiting and frequent examinations of the children, are the only modes in which much good can be done at present. The test plan which I have proposed as the condition of the Government grant, will prevent neglect and absolute indifference to the progress of the children on the part of the masters.

With regard to the system of management, as far as teaching is concerned, this must of course be mainly dependent on the competence of the masters, and I believe that a very great effect will be produced here by the examinations above referred to, by which means classification will be ensured in a great measure. The object in any alteration affecting either teachers or children, but especially the latter, should be that they should come to feel themselves under a regular system, which will not be relaxed in their favour at any time, and that in giving or withholding aid from the children, in removing or superseding masters, and in all other respects, there is nothing of a personal question involved. At present, I can find no signs of either masters or children considering themselves as under such a system. The examinations and visits from the Inspector should be at regular intervals, and the master should be required to keep a school register, and furnish a quarterly report to the parents on a printed form. A list of books from which the children will be examined, should be furnished to every teacher. There are also many other minor ways in which regularity and discipline might be enforced, which it would be out of place to mention in the present report.

By these means I think that to a certain extent the schools may be immediately improved, where it is possible to carry them on at all. But in many cases where a school is required it will have to be neglected in consequence of the inability of the Government or district to provide sufficient funds for supporting one. For this I can see no remedy as long as the assistance given arises wholly from the endowment fund, nor while this is the case does there appear to be any prospect of diminishing the existent indifference to education. My opinion, therefore, is that the schools will not be placed upon a really satisfactory footing until a general education rate is levied, and local boards are established for the administration of such sums as may be allotted to each district by the Government. As under such a system, people will have to pay, whether they avail themselves of the schools or not, I believe their indifference to the education of their children will be very materially diminished. During the present condition of the Province I fear it is impossible that such a system, which has been adopted in Otago and Nelson,—in the latter certainly successfully,—should be introduced, but I consider it is my duty to state plainly that I believe no modification or alteration of the present plan can stir up that popular interest in education which is essential to success.

ROBERT H. EYTON,
Inspector of Schools.

December 9, 1867.