

Wanganui, Palmerston North, Blenheim, Nelson, Timaru, Invercargill, &c. The decreased expenditure is due to the restriction of the grants during last year ; indeed, the greater portion of the expenditure, £184,674, had reference to grants approved prior to the 1st April, 1922. Included in this sum was £8,948 in connection with the replacement of buildings destroyed by fire. During the year 1921–22 most of the Education Boards restricted their applications to the most urgent cases, owing to the financial situation, but during the past year forwarded applications that had been held over, together with those for new cases that had arisen. Even though many applications were declined or postponed indefinitely, those still before the Department on the 1st April, 1923, totalled £488,523, which may be taken as a measure of the work regarded by Education Boards as urgent during the present financial year. At the close of the year the commitments amounted to £171,727. The above-mentioned sums do not include any amounts allocated during the year by Education Boards to additions, remodelling, &c., out of their rebuilding funds.

A very considerable number of halls are still rented as schools or to provide increased accommodation at existing schools. In general, the accommodation in such buildings is not satisfactory, and the provision of permanent accommodation is becoming more pressingly urgent. It is hoped that during the present year funds will permit of the worst of these halls being replaced. While it has been found impossible to provide for the remodelling or replacement of large city schools that do not now come up to the standard of modern requirements, a substantial amount of remodelling has been done in connection with the provision of necessary additional accommodation, particularly in the case of the smaller schools. The results of such remodelling have been most satisfactory even where the building is erected in permanent material such as brick or stone. As was stated last year, " Provided the materials are sound it is a very bad building indeed that cannot be remodelled to advantage at a fraction of the cost of a new structure." Very little was done in the way of erecting new teachers' residences, and during the current year the most urgent cases will be considered.

The portable buildings designed by the Department, to which reference was made last year, continue to give general satisfaction both to teachers and to the local school authorities. They are designed for use as moveable buildings following railway or other public-works construction ; to provide accommodation in rural districts where the ultimate centrality of the school population is for the time being doubtful ; as auxiliary accommodation where the permanency in the increase in the attendance is not assured, as in schools that fluctuate between Grade II and Grade III ; and to provide for the pressure in accommodation pending the erection of permanent buildings. In this connection they have enabled the Department to avoid the immediate cost of expensive permanent additions to schools, and, as they can be erected beside existing schools, they have also allowed of the postponement for the time being of the erection of schools on new sites in connection with which there would be involved considerable expense on the site, fencing, out-buildings, &c. They are also coming more and more into favour for workshops, laboratories, domestic-science rooms, &c., as local authorities are recognizing the elasticity they afford in modifying the accommodation according to the changing educational needs.

Where Education Boards employ their own structural staffs and have their own workshops, the work continues to be found more satisfactory and less costly than under the tender system. Striking examples of this have come under the notice of the Department during the past year. What is even more important from the educational point of view is that the Boards' permanent men, being constantly engaged on school buildings, know exactly what is aimed at, and become skilful in regard to matters that are apparently unimportant from a structural point of view, but are of great importance in connection with the working of the school and the comfort and convenience of the pupils and teachers. The saving in cost is particularly noticeable where an existing building has to be altered to provide for additions, or in the process of remodelling. The Department considers that the maintenance of school buildings is undoubtedly work that should be carried out by permanent staffs. Of the nine Education Boards, six now widely employ their own staffs.