

one central school, and these schools serve to show that consolidation is the most important factor in improving rural education in this country. This is no new and untried experiment, for such schools have been in operation in parts of the United States for nearly sixty years, and they have become so successful that the consolidated school now forms an integral part of the school system throughout the United States and Canada. So convinced are educationists in these countries of the value and feasibility of consolidation that small rural schools are being closed by the hundred every year and their places taken by well-equipped modern consolidated schools. There is no comparison between the training provided in the small isolated sole-teacher school and that in a larger school with a numerous staff and wider curriculum. The consolidated school must, however, be introduced gradually. The transport problem in New Zealand is more difficult than in America. School buses are double and petrol treble the cost in America, roads are more primitive, and population more scattered. Again, the Government cannot scrap useful buildings, nor can it in a few years find the cost of providing new central-school buildings to replace them. The policy is therefore to confine consolidation schemes to places where the establishment of a new school or the rebuilding of an old worn-out school can be avoided and conveyance to a central school over good roads provided at a reasonable cost. At the present time there are about a hundred conveyances, mostly motor-buses, employed in the conveyance of children, and as roads are improved and the cost of transport reduced the policy is to extend the system. The Department is receiving numerous unreasonable requests to pay the full cost of conveyance of children to school where the distances are not great and the number of children is small and the cost high for the service to be performed. In all such cases the present allowance of 6d. per pupil per day plus half the reasonable cost above that capitation is considered all that the Government should be called upon to provide. The Department wishes to do all it reasonably can to offer the farm child the best educational facilities, but it cannot undertake to provide motor-buses at whatever cost to convey to school every child whose home is distant over two or three miles.

ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE.

The total enrolment in public primary schools at the end of the year 1925 was 214,724, an increase of 1,434 over the total for the previous year.

Regularity of Attendance.—The regularity of attendance has continued at a highly satisfactory figure, the average attendance for the year 1925 being 91·4 per cent. of the average weekly roll number. The Otago Education District again has the highest degree of regularity, but the figures for all districts are creditable, in no case falling below 90·4 per cent.

The relative activities of the nine Education Boards may be gauged from the following figures, which are exclusive of the secondary departments of district high schools :—

Education District.	Enrolment.			Schools, 1925 (excluding Grade 0).	Adult Teachers, 1925.
	1920.	1925.	Percentage Increase, Five Years.		
Auckland	56,881	65,070	14	703	1,800
Taranaki	10,276	11,474	12	160	341
Wanganui	15,605	17,218	10	190	477
Hawke's Bay	14,319	16,277	14	165	456
Wellington	24,717	26,972	9	227	725
Nelson	7,000	7,143	2	122	243
Canterbury	34,775	36,887	6	379	979
Otago	22,012	21,360	—3	242	608
Southland	12,060	12,323	2	183	373
Totals	197,645	214,724	9	2,371	6,002

The more pronounced increase in the North Island districts is, of course, a natural corollary to the northward trend of the population. It will be observed that the Auckland District accounts for almost 48 per cent. of the increase for the Dominion.