Conference of Education Board Architects

Held at Wellington, March 24-5th, 1920.

A conference of Board architects convened by the Canterbury Education Board met at the Education Board Office, Wellington, at 10 a.m., Wednesday, 24th March, 1920. All boards were represented.

Present:— Messrs G. Penlington (Canterbury, Chairman); J. Farrell (Auckland); C. J. Dowland (Hawkes Bay); C. H. Moore (Taranaki); E. R. Hodge (Wanganui); A. McDougall (Wellington); A. H. Leaper (Nelson); J. Rodger (Otago); W. K. McCaw (Southland).

Mr. Forsyth, Chairman Wellington Education Board, welcomed the Delegates to this, the first conference of Board architects. He was sure that great benefit would result from this meeting of Board architects through conference and discussion on school building, practice and requirements. He looked forward with confidence to progressive improvement in school architecture. To this desirable end such meetings must appreciably contribute.

On the invitation of the conference, Mr. Spencer attended both days to discuss a number of important matters, and, as far as possible, to explain the views of the Department on the questions discussed.

Aspect—Lighting.

In a discussion on the general aspect of the school, all delegates present were of opinion that the N.E. to E. lighting is the best procurable and, therefore, gives the most satisfactory results. In this connection was discussed the most suitable window for lighting and for thorough class-room ventilation.

Cost.

In considering the cost of construction of various types of schools, delegates gave estimates of cost in their particular districts, which showed a fairly wide range of cost. After hearing Mr. Spencer in the matter of standardisation, it was generally agreed that local conditions and size of buildings vary to such an extent that it is not possible to fix a standard.

Water Supply.

The matter of water supply was discussed at length. Preference was expressed for tanks both concrete (built above the surface) and the ordinary 400 gallon square tanks where no other supply is available. Filters were not considered as of any benefit unless under the supervision of the teachers and cleaned out at regular intervals.

Building Maintenance and Construction.

The question of day versus contract work was very fully discussed, and although the day work system is productive of perhaps a better class of work, it was felt that it should not be encouraged where it was possible to secure tenders as it led to a great deal of office work, buying and directing generally, and the difficulty of procuring materials and labour caused the architect and his staff a great deal of work, while it was generally thought that all repair work should be carried out with the Board's own staff. The 10 per cent method of erecting buildings, etc., by contractors was looked upon as most unsatisfactory from every point of view. It was considered best that all buildings should be of one storey, except where the site is limited, and cannot be enlarged, or is on hilly ground. The basement could be used for play sheds, boiler rooms, etc.

Assembly Halls.

Mr. Hodge, of Wanganui, after exhibiting many photographs of various schools in the Wanganui district and photographs of the halls and the uses made thereof, read a very interesting paper on the uses of an assembly hall and the school building generally, which showed clearly the advantages gained, principally to the health, safety and convenience of the pupils by such an adjunct. The whole of the delegates approved of the principle, and it was decided to recommend to the Boards that the senior inspectors be asked to take steps to obtain assembly halls for all large schools.

Size of Rooms.

Regarding the size of classrooms, it was decided that class rooms for the most part should be 26ft. x 24ft. A diagram was presented by Mr. Spencer showing a suitable desk arrangement for three class rooms. For infant departments class rooms might be built 30ft x 24ft. in conjunction with rooms of about 24ft. x 24ft. (with movable partition for assembly purposes).

Corridors.

It was decided that 10ft. be the minimum width for large schools, where hat and cloak rooms form part of the building.

Open Air Schools—Ventilation.

A paper on open air schools was read by Mr. Moore. The general opinion was that sashes in class rooms should be arranged to open up as much as possible to give the greatest amount of open space under suitable weather conditions. The two questions concerning the best methods of ventilating and lighting class rooms caused much discussion and it was agreed that the best ventilation obtainable was the cross system, although it was recognised that ceiling and Tobin tubes have considerable advantages. The lighting from the left is without question the best for class rooms, skylights not being favoured except as a means of improving rooms where the lighting is deficient. This applies more particularly to the older buildings.

Retiring Rooms and Offices.

It was decided that every school of two or more classrooms should have an office for the use of the head teacher and staff; that schools of four and five