

Buildings

When the Government came into office the school-building programme had, owing to the depression, been practically at a standstill for three years. It realized that little advance could take place in education until satisfactory school buildings could be provided, and so it immediately began a vigorous new building programme. Unfortunately, the war intervened before all arrears could be caught up, but, even so, the number of new buildings erected and old ones remodelled in the past ten years is most impressive. The following figures give some measure of the volume of the work done. The remarkable rise for the year ended 31st March, 1946, is very gratifying, and gives an indication of the Government's policy in school building in the post-war years :—

Capital Expenditure on School Buildings from Public Works Account

Financial year ended 31st March,—	Amount. £
1935	62,183
1936	169,733
1937	276,732
1938	554,759
1939	727,078
1940	851,726
1941	555,572
1942	465,686
1943	207,390
1944	236,137
1945	477,393
1946	1,187,823

The mere figures of capital expenditure, however, give no indication of the qualitative changes that have taken place in school buildings over recent years, of the light and colour that have been introduced, or of the libraries, workshops, homecraft rooms, and facilities for practical work generally that have been provided in the best of the modern buildings. The recognition that education is more than pencil-and-paper work with large passive classes has of itself created an enormous building programme.

Very many schools and residences still fall far short of what the Government would desire, but every effort will be made to remedy this as soon as possible. A peculiar combination of circumstances will create an unusual demand for new buildings over the next five years, and the Government's policy is to press forward with a vigorous school building programme that will—

(1) Catch up with the arrears in building resulting, firstly, from the depression, and, secondly, from the war.

(2) Cater for the increased school rolls resulting from the raising of the school age and from the rapid rises in the birth-rate in the periods centring on the years 1941 and 1945. The years 1951-54 will be critical ones for accommodation in both primary and post-primary schools, and preparations to meet the situation must begin immediately.

(3) Meet the special needs for school buildings arising in Government housing settlements, and from drifts in population generally.

(4) Enable the size of classes to be greatly reduced.

(5) Replace the large number of schools built in the early days of the national system.

(6) Enable the intermediate-school system to be extended wherever possible, when new accommodation is needed.

(7) Provide school residences for sole and head teachers in all rural areas.

(8) Provide for very greatly increased enrolments at the University colleges and agricultural colleges.

(9) Provide training-college hostels.