

SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

The ordinary votes for school buildings were formerly divided among the several Boards according to population, but for the last two years the money has been distributed on the basis of the average attendance in the several education districts, with adjustments according to (1) the number of schools, and (2) the increase of population in each district. The money received by the Boards out of the ordinary votes—£45,000 in all—is devoted (*a*) to the maintenance and repair of existing buildings and furniture, and (*b*) to the cost of new buildings and furniture, and of additions to existing buildings. The items named under (*a*) are recurrent, and with them may be classed the expenditure required for the rebuilding of worn-out schools; those under (*b*) may be looked upon as charges against capital, or what may be called “capital expenditure.” The former would most fairly be met by the payment of amounts calculated upon a certain percentage of the value of the buildings to be maintained and replaced; the latter would vary according to the increase of population in any given district and to the number of districts in which the increase was such as to render new schools or extensions of existing schools necessary. In most of the education districts the total of the recurrent items (*a*) would be roughly proportional to the average school attendance or to the population. The charges (*b*), classed above as “capital expenditure,” stand on an entirely different footing; they are, moreover, partly met now by grants out of the special vote for schools in newly settled districts.

It is a question whether a distribution of the whole of the building-votes based upon the distinction drawn above would not be a juster and more satisfactory method of distributing the moneys voted for these purposes than the system hitherto adopted, which probably, however, was as close an approximation to justice as could be devised so long as settlement was proceeding in all parts of the colony under similar or nearly similar conditions.

The special vote for schools in newly settled districts, &c., has been distributed this year in a somewhat different mode from that followed in former years. Instead of waiting for all the claims from the different districts to be sent in before making a distribution of the total amount available, claims have been dealt with on their merits as they have been received. Boards have been asked also to supply fuller details in regard to the schools they propose to establish. One effect has been, apparently, that Boards do not now make applications for grants prospectively, but wait until the need for new schools is well defined, and the work of building can be immediately begun. Some of the applications under this head were not finally dealt with until after the close of the financial year, and since the 31st March further grants have been made amounting in all to £2,423.

The distribution of the ordinary votes for school buildings was made as follows: Auckland, £9,500; Taranaki, £1,650; Wanganui, £3,925; Wellington, £5,200; Hawke's Bay, £2,600; Marlborough, £900; Nelson, £2,000; Grey, £775; Westland, £750; North Canterbury, £6,000; South Canterbury, £1,800; Otago, £6,000; Southland, £3,400; balance to Native schools, £500: total, £45,000.

The following distribution was made of the special vote for schools in newly settled districts: Auckland, £1,426; Wanganui, £807; Hawke's Bay, £435; Marlborough, £174; North Canterbury, £301; Southland, £207; Native schools, £2,463; undistributed, £19,187: total, £25,000.

In Table Q will be found figures in reference to the deficiency of school buildings, schools with less than ten pupils in average attendance being omitted. Out of 1,571 schools 88 were being carried on in buildings not belonging to Boards, whilst in 1899 there were 77 out of 1,544. The number of schools without residences increased from 517 to 525. Allowing 10 square feet per child, 55 schools were overcrowded, even taking the average attendance, and not the number on the roll.