

TABLE P.—BUILDING ACCOUNT.—ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF BOARDS ON 31ST DECEMBER, 1901.

Education Districts.	Assets and Deficits.						Liabilities and Balances.					
	Cash.		Due from all Sources.		Deficits.		Overdrafts.		Other Liabilities.		Balances.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Auckland	2,750	0 0	3,587	2 5	1,504	10 9	4,832	11 8	..	..
Taranaki	875 7 10	1,997	0 0	..	..	..	..	79	14 7	2,792	13 3
Wanganui	3,032 3 0	2,075	0 0	..	..	..	..	2,661	13 1	2,445	9 11
Wellington	5,275	0 0	604	8 1	2,191	9 2	3,687	18 11	..	..
Hawke's Bay	892 19 0	2,675	0 0	..	..	..	..	931	10 0	2,636	9 0
Marlborough	925	0 0	231	18 3	866	18 3	350	0 0	..	..
Nelson	823 2 4	2,000	0 0	..	..	..	..	810	16 0	2,012	6 4
Grey	387	10 0	102	15 8	96	5 8	394	0 0	..	..
Westland	750	0 0	..	..	11	11 6	55	14 6	680	14 0
North Canterbury	459 13 1	4,000	0 0	..	..	..	..	1,797	10 7	2,662	2 6
South Canterbury	1,339 1 3	2,133	0 0	..	..	..	..	1,801	13 11	1,670	7 4
Otago	6,125	16 4	..	..	2,442	13 9	2,191	18 0	1,491	4 7
Southland	377 11 11	3,455	3 0	..	..	..	..	975	4 0	2,857	10 11
Totals	7,799 18 5	34,548 9 4	4,526 4 5	7,055 9 1	20,570 5 3	19,248 17 10					

SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

For the last three years the ordinary votes for school buildings have been distributed not, as formerly, according to population, but on the basis of the average attendance in the several education districts, with adjustments according to the number of schools and to the increase of population in each district. Some of the items to which the grants are devoted are recurrent in nature, such as the maintenance and repairs of existing buildings and furniture, and the rebuilding of worn-out schools; other items—for instance, the building of new schools and of additions to existing schools—are of the kind that may fairly be regarded as a charge against capital. The recurrent items entail an expenditure that might be roughly estimated as a percentage of the original cost of the buildings; they fall under two heads, maintenance (including repainting, repairs, &c.) and rebuilding. To ascertain the amount that should be set aside to meet the cost of rebuilding it would be necessary to ascertain the average period for which a school building lasts, which may probably be taken as between thirty-three and forty years in the case of wooden buildings that are well constructed in the first instance and kept in good repair afterwards. For an average school, therefore, from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 per cent. of its cost should be written off as a general rule each year, and an equal amount should theoretically be set aside to meet the prospective cost of rebuilding. But as it would be undesirable, if not impracticable, for Education Boards to form sinking funds for the purpose of rebuilding schools as they became too dilapidated for further occupation, the same end might be attained just as well, and far more conveniently, if one-fortieth to one-thirty-third of the school buildings in a district were replaced each year. If, however, the average life of school buildings in any district is found to be greater or less than the estimate given above the proportion to be replaced must be altered accordingly.

It ought to be possible to ascertain within fairly close limits the cost of carrying out ordinary repainting and repairs of buildings so nearly alike as are the school buildings in any given education district, and no one needs to be reminded that the neglect of ordinary maintenance considerably shortens the lifetime of any building. If less is spent on maintenance, more will have to be spent on rebuilding; and it would seem, therefore, that a fair basis for the distribution of the portion of the building votes intended to meet the recurrent items named would be a fixed percentage on the original cost of the buildings erected.

The special vote for schools in newly settled districts, &c., has been distributed this year in a similar mode to that followed in 1900. 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