

It will be noted in the various sections of this report dealing specifically with the various branches of the Department's activities that the correspondence school continues to increase in popularity and usefulness; the child welfare work has increased and is likely to become more costly, very largely as the result of the lack of employment for boys and girls as well as for those responsible for their maintenance; the education of mentally backward children is being successfully carried on in special classes; and steady progress is being made towards improving the physique of school-children through the medium of an improved system of physical instruction.

COST OF EDUCATION.

The appendix to this report shows in detail, under various headings, the expenditure on education during the financial year ended 31st March, 1931. The total expenditure, including endowment revenue, amounted to £4,174,855, as against £4,138,577 in the previous year, an increase of £36,278. If from the total sum of £4,174,855 expended on education in 1930-31 is deducted the sum of £501,344 spent on buildings, the net amount remaining is £3,673,511, which is equivalent to £2 9s. 3d. per head of the mean population of New Zealand (1,492,376) for the year 1930. The cost per head in the previous year, excluding cost of buildings, was £2 10s. 2d. The expenditure per head of mean population on the main branches of education in 1930 was (exclusive of expenditure on new buildings) as follows: Primary, £1 11s. 7d.; secondary, 5s. 4d.; technical, 3s.; higher education, 1s. 8d.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND SITES.

The Department has continued to provide additional accommodation where the attendance has increased and where new districts have become more closely settled. Where possible, out-of-date buildings have been improved, and some of the older buildings have been replaced.

During recent years the Department has given special consideration to the question of open-air classrooms. The opinions of health authorities and Inspectors of Schools have been sought and carefully considered, and different types of rooms have been experimented with. Health statistics have been obtained regarding children housed in open-air rooms and compared with similar statistics from schools of the ordinary fresh-air type. In general, it has been a matter of difficulty to state that one type gives better health results than the other. While the open-air classroom gives an out-of-door feeling and enables the buildings to be rapidly evacuated, some difficulties are experienced when large schools are housed in separate open-air rooms; for instance, an exceptionally large site is needed when several separate classrooms are scattered over it, and the headmaster does not find supervision so easy. The experiment has, however, proved of great interest both to educationists and to the medical profession, and the erection of further buildings of this type is contemplated in suitable localities.

The 1931 Finance Act (No. 2) repealed the Education Purposes Loans Act, 1919, and abolished the Education Loans Account. Amounts required for the erection of school buildings will now be paid out of the Public Works Fund as appropriated by Parliament for the purpose.

The expenditure last year included the completion of additional accommodation at Brooklyn (Wellington) and Southbridge (Canterbury); and new schools have been provided at Russell Street (Palmerston North), Picton, Eketahuna, Miramar Central (Wellington), and at Geraldine (Canterbury). Additions have been made to the technical schools at Auckland, Hamilton, Hawera, Wellington, and Invercargill; also to the Hastings High School, Rongotai Boys' College, and Wellington East Girls' College.