

ment and improvement of existing ones; that the expenditure on the purchase of sites had decreased from £12,801 2s. 7d. in 1879, to £1,832 11s. 7d. in 1880; and that the cost of plans, specifications, supervision of work, &c., was at the rate of about 4·7 per cent. on the gross outlay.

Table M also shows the number of schools in operation at the close of 1880, the number of residences connected with schools, and the number of schools held in buildings not the property of the Boards. The Boards' returns show that 34 additional school residences had been provided during the year, and that nearly an equal number were in course of erection. The number of schools held in buildings not the property of the Boards has diminished to some extent; most of them are small half-time and subsidised or aided schools.

The annual reports of the Boards enter with more or less fulness into the question of the sufficiency of the school accommodation; and, while admitting the advantages which have resulted from the expenditure of the moneys voted by the General Assembly during the past four years, nearly all of them point out that much remains to be done to provide for localities which, owing to increase of population or the extension of settlement, are urgently demanding the enlargement of the existing accommodation, or the establishment of new schools. With a view to ascertain as accurately as possible the circumstances and wants of the several education districts, a circular, of which a copy is appended, was addressed to Boards, requesting them to forward returns showing, as at January 1, 1881, the state of their building accounts, their liabilities in respect of works under contract, and an estimate in detail of the new works considered necessary. A summary of the returns furnished by the Boards in reply to the circular is contained in Table No. 4 of the Appendix. The returns show that on January 1, 1881, the Boards' available balances (including the sums due to them by the Treasury on account of the appropriations under the vote of last session) and their liabilities under contracts amounted in the aggregate to £47,157 12s. 6d. and £24,762 17s. 2d. respectively, and that their estimates of the cost of necessary works, in addition to those under contract, amounted to £154,546. To meet this demand, there was the sum of £22,394 15s. 4d. (£47,157 12s. 6d. less £24,762 17s. 2d.), leaving an aggregate of unsatisfied claims to the extent of £132,151 4s. 8d.

The vote of £50,000 passed by the General Assembly last year for school-buildings was apportioned as follows: Auckland, £14,000; Taranaki, £750; Wanganui, £2,000; Wellington, £2,500; Hawke's Bay, £1,000; Marlborough, £750; Nelson, £1,200; North Canterbury, £6,000; South Canterbury, £2,000; Westland, £4,500; Otago, £6,000; Southland, £2,000; and Native schools, £7,300. Last year's report explains somewhat fully the principles upon which the moneys specially voted by the General Assembly for school-buildings have hitherto been apportioned.* Owing to the consideration given to the relative necessities of the different education districts in the distribution of past grants, there is reason to believe that their circumstances and wants as regards school accommodation have now been brought to such a degree of similarity as to warrant the distributing of future votes more strictly according to population than has hitherto been deemed justifiable.

* The apportionment of the moneys specially voted by the General Assembly for school-buildings has received very careful consideration. Although the relative population and extent of the education districts have had to be taken into account, yet, in the administration of a colonial scheme of education, it has been considered indispensable that regard should be had in a very large measure to the absolute necessities of the several districts. The intimate knowledge which has now been acquired respecting the circumstances of the several education districts has shown that while some of them, more particularly those in the South Island, had been somewhat fairly provided with school-buildings at the date of the abolition of the provinces, there were others in which a large number of the schools were held in most unsuitable buildings, many of them being rooms, halls, churches, and other places not in the ownership of the Boards. This was more particularly the case in the cities and larger towns, such as Auckland, Wellington, Napier, and New Plymouth, although the same state of matters prevailed also to a greater or less extent in the country districts. In Hawke's Bay it might be said that when the Act of 1877 came into operation accommodation had to be provided for all the school children in the district, as at that time there were only seven small schools, of no great value, that properly belonged to the Board. In the City of Wellington no school-buildings had been erected at the public cost until the appropriations from the colonial revenue became available for the purpose; and this has necessarily led to a very large expenditure, not only on buildings, but also on the purchase of school sites. Auckland, Napier, New Plymouth, Wanganui, and other towns in the North Island were in almost the same position. With very few exceptions all the school-buildings in Westland District that belong to the Board have been paid for out of the votes of the General Assembly, and the district is as yet inadequately provided with teachers' residences.—(Third Annual Report, page 11, Appendix to Journals of the House of Representatives, 1880, H.—1A.)