

The need for increased class-room space occurs first in the primary schools, and it is pleasing to be able to record that much solid progress has been made by Education Boards in the provision of primary-school buildings. To cope with urgent needs, standard unit-type class-rooms have been used in some districts, but no falling off in the standard of school accommodation is allowed. Architects are working under great pressure to design and build new schools and class-rooms, and, in close consultation with practising teachers and the Department's Inspectors, are overlooking no opportunity for improvement in design and layout of school buildings. Some degree of standardization is essential, but not to the extent that the schools will all have the same design.

The major problems in post-primary school accommodation are still a few years ahead, but as larger buildings are required than are needed for primary schools a longer period is necessary to design and build them. A considerable number of our post-primary schools have reached, or are reaching, the size which renders necessary the provision of new schools rather than extensive additions to existing ones. In the larger cities particularly, several new post-primary school buildings must be provided during the next few years. On the basis of data obtained from surveys of population trends many new sites have already been chosen, and others are being sought. Plans are in the course of preparation for new schools in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, and Palmerston North. Others will be put in hand as soon as possible.

The shortage of cement and of steel is making it necessary to build some schools in wood when more permanent buildings would have been preferable, but at present there is no option. Stringent precautions are being taken in the design of wooden buildings to reduce the fire-risk to the minimum.

Educational Policy

During the past year there have been no major changes in educational policy, but the effects of changes made during recent years are still working themselves out. The changed emphasis in educational methods by which children should be encouraged actively to learn instead of passively submitting to being taught is now accepted as good practice, but it will be some time yet before all the implications of the new processes are fully grasped by all teachers.

Refresher courses and specialist services are helping teachers to understand and intelligently apply modern educational theory, but education in a rapidly changing world will not remain efficient without some systematic plan for advancing the education of the teacher in service. Till the time is ripe for the formulation of such a plan the refresher course movement and the encouragement of reading by the provision of professional libraries must remain the chief means of keeping teachers up to date in their thinking and in their teaching practice. It reflects credit on both primary- and secondary-school teachers that the summer vacation courses are attended to maximum capacity.

One still hears criticisms of the newer methods of teaching from those who have not grasped the full import of the changes that have taken place since they themselves were pupils in the schools, but no one who has been inside a present-day school while classes were in progress can remain unconvinced. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that the 1946 reports of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland on both primary and post-primary education recommended similar policies to those which we have been following in New Zealand. Scotland has long been noted for leadership in education and for a respect for sound learning. We in New Zealand owe much to the determination of the early Scottish settlers that the educational needs of their new country should not be neglected. It is therefore very pleasing indeed to read in these reports so much that confirms the soundness of the educational developments in New Zealand.