

the Boards employed their own staffs the work was cheaper and better than under the tender system. This has encouraged other Education Boards to employ direct labour, and the results have been satisfactory. The "cost plus fee" system of contracting was discussed also, and several Boards in a few instances have adopted it with advantage.

Towards the end of the financial year the increasing gravity of the financial situation made it more and more imperative that grants should be restricted to more urgent cases. This accounts for the fact that, though during the year applications to the amount of £790,000 were received, an expenditure of only £390,000 was approved. Latterly, grants have been approved only in cases of outstanding urgency where no school at all existed or where the class-room accommodation was inadequate.

Until the financial position is relieved it may be necessary to make considerable use of the portable and extensible school that has been designed by the Department. This portable building is intended to follow railway-construction, or be used temporarily where the centrality of settlement is not assured or where it is not certain that additional accommodation will be permanently required. The building is constructed of factory-made sections, which can be transported to the site, and there erected in a very short space of time. Similarly, an existing portable school can be cheaply and expeditiously added to. As the sections can be used to build a range of rooms, it may be found necessary, for the time being, to use these portable buildings widely, on account of their cheapness.

During the year the building staff of the Department has been very much strengthened by the appointment of a School Architect—Mr. J. T. Mair, A.R.I.B.A., Graduate in Architecture, University of Pennsylvania.

ROLL NUMBER.

(Tables B1 and B2.)

The number of children attending public schools in 1920, as shown by the average weekly roll, was 196,731, as compared with 193,655 in the previous year—an increase of 3,076. The following figures give in detail the average weekly roll and roll number at the end of 1920:—

	Mean of Average Weekly Roll.		Roll Number at end of Year.	
	Including Secondary Departments of District High Schools.	Excluding Secondary Departments of District High Schools.	Including Secondary Departments of District High Schools.	Excluding Secondary Departments of District High Schools.
Year 1920	196,731	194,188	199,802	197,645
Year 1919	193,655	191,153	196,059	193,900
Increase in 1920 ..	3,076	3,035	3,743	3,745
Increase per cent. in 1920	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.9

It was observed in the last report that the amount of increase in the roll from year to year had been declining; in 1920, however, there is again a rise, the increase in numbers over the previous year being 1.6 per cent., as compared with an increase of 1.2 per cent. in 1919. The increase is again more marked in the schools of the North Island than in those of the South Island, the roll of the former being 2.4 per cent. greater than in 1919 and of the latter 0.3 per cent. greater. During the last ten years the average weekly roll has increased by 27.1 per cent., so that there were more than one and a quarter times as many children in the schools in 1920 as there were in 1910. The increase in numbers in 1920 over 1919 is spread fairly evenly over all classes, being greatest, however, in the preparatory classes, S1 and S6.

The table below shows the mean average roll number for every fifth year from 1878 to 1908, and for each of the last ten years; the table gives also the total average attendance for each year, the average attendance as a percentage of the roll (including secondary departments of high schools), and the number of teachers employed in the public schools.