

given, and being persuaded that these instructions could only have been given by an individual member or members of the Board, whose authority in their private capacity he did not recognize, was not disposed to give the explanations required. To use his own words, he "suspected a trap," and he was strengthened in this suspicion by the fact that he had instructed the master to whom leave was given to report the matter to the Secretary, and he had every reason to suppose that this had been done.

It is hardly necessary to go into the details of this quarrel, or to apportion exactly the praise or blame. The essential point is that, from a series of unfortunate accidents, a state of antagonism arose between the Board and the Rector, which completely put an end to all feelings of cordiality or desire of co-operation.

The Board, at its next meeting, caused a letter to be written to Mr. Norrie, of a somewhat intemperate and irritating character, to the effect that he was wanting in courtesy both to the Board and its Secretary, and this not because he had used discourteous language to the Board or its Secretary, but because he had questioned the right of the Secretary, without authority from the Board itself, to interfere in his administration of the school.

While, therefore, it appears that Mr. Norrie was unnecessarily suspicious, it can hardly be denied that the action on the part of the Board, and of some of its members, had a tendency (the Commissioners believe unintentionally) to keep up the irritation. Perhaps some part of the mischief is due to the laxity with which the proceedings of the Board were managed. The business was practically done, for the most part, by one or two members who happen to reside in or near Dunedin. During the sitting of the General Assembly a large proportion of the Board have been attending to their duties as members of the House of Representatives, and from various causes there are, out of eight members, only four available for meetings. Of these, two reside in Dunedin, and are, it appears, in the habit of giving directions to the Secretary and preparing the business to be transacted at the meetings. One of the other two comes into Dunedin on a Wednesday, and it seems to be understood that, whenever any business is to be transacted, a special meeting may be held on that day of the week. This understanding appears to serve in lieu of the notice required by the Act. Those who are not generally in the habit of attending do not, apparently, get any notice at all.

Thus special meetings are frequently held without the required notice having been given, and with no intimation of the special business for which the meeting is to be held. In short, although the ordinary meeting of the Board, as prescribed by the Act, is fixed for the last Wednesday in every month, yet a special meeting may be held and business of which no proper notices have been given may be transacted thereat on any Wednesday.

It appears that a Committee of the Board is in existence, which goes by the name of the High School Committee. This Committee, originally appointed for a special purpose, seems gradually to have become charged informally with the general administration of the High School. But, as this body is composed exclusively of those members of the Board who take an active share in the proceedings of the Board itself, it is not always easy to distinguish the action of the Board sitting as a Board from the action of the High School Committee sitting as a Committee. The only tangible distinction between the Board and the High School Committee appears to be that, while the Board's meetings are held in public and the discussions reported in the papers, the meetings of the Committee are not open to the public. This may possibly explain a feeling which prevails in some quarters, that the proceedings of the Board, and the discussions which there take place do not disclose the real grounds upon which the decisions are arrived at, nor the real arguments by which they are supported.

In the course of their inquiries the Commissioners have had incidentally brought to their notice circumstances connected with the relations between the Board and the teaching staff which point to the conclusion that there is a certain feeling of insecurity among those under engagement with the Board. Such a feeling, whether justified by facts or purely imaginary, cannot fail to have a detrimental effect upon the prosperity of the school.

It is alleged that one of the masters originally selected in England felt aggrieved because the Provincial Government had, as he considered, arbitrarily varied the terms of his agreement and placed him in a less advantageous position than that to which the agreement entered into in England entitled him. It is also alleged that that agreement was represented to him as not binding, and that the Government could cancel it without any compensation, should he refuse voluntarily to surrender his claim and accept the compensation offered. This, in conjunction with other minor matters occurring at a subsequent date, led to his resignation.

The truth of this allegation seems hardly to admit of a doubt from the fact that one of the masters appointed under the very same terms of engagement and at the same time was offered a similar alternative. The proposal made to this gentlemen was, to accept an appointment terminable upon notice, in lieu of his appointment for life, to submit to a reduction of his fixed salary in consideration of receiving a part of the fees, which it was assumed would be an equivalent for the amount lost in fixed salary, and to accept £450 as compensation. In this case, however, the gentleman concerned took legal advice, and, finding that his contract with the Government could be enforced, he refused to accede to the proposal.

Another source of disquietude seems to have been the political character of the Board. The Education Board, under the Provincial Government, was almost identical with the Provincial Government itself. It consisted of the Superintendent and his Executive Council, together with the Speaker of the Provincial Council. The Board, so constituted, laboured under two disadvantages which prevented it from effectively administering the High Schools or prescribing their operations. First, it was a political body, and as such liable to frequent changes. Second, the members who composed it, however useful as administrators, or however well fitted to act as heads of a political party, may reasonably be supposed not to have been specially fitted in all cases to organize and direct the system best adapted for imparting a liberal education.

As a matter of fact, it appears that, except in cases where political feeling was brought to bear, the Board did not, as a general rule, assume the functions of a governing body, but for the most part