

of anything in the nature of instruction or educational work. I am quite certain that the distaste for reading which we sometimes observe in young people after leaving school, a great deal of the larrikinism which we see in towns, and a great deal of the dislike of intellectual labour of any kind which is so common arise from the the absurd method of examining schools throughout the world.

95. *Dr. Fitchett.*] Do I understand you that the result is influenced by payment by passes?—Yes; payment by passes sets a premium upon it.

96. *Mr. M. J. S. Mackenzie.*] Did you ever know of a boy of good physical constitution breaking down under this strain?—Yes, several.

97. Several?—I cannot mention the number. I should require to think before stating the number; but it is an occurrence that happens within my experience frequently. I do not know the exact number of times that it has occurred; but when it does happen it does not strike me as strange; so that it must have happened frequently.

98. Does that happen from study alone?—I differ from you in calling it “study;” I do not think it is. I do not think the process they go through can by any stretch of charity be called study. It is a process of worry and anxiety; it is not study. These young people are worried about passing their examinations; they have anxiety as to the result; they are under the time-pressure that is involved in the examination taking place on a certain day; they have the fear of possible failure through the time being fixed, and on the day of examination they work at high pressure. All this happens to both girls and boys. It is particularly severe in the case of girls, and the result is that a break-down is not uncommon.

99. Are you not assuming that it is general?—It is very common, especially among girls. Girls have not the relief of outdoor sports which boys have during their school-life. Girls are ambitious, emulous, and set great store by school distinctions. Girls do break down very frequently. I am not speaking now of children of tender years, but of children in the higher classes.

100. What age?—I think I can recall cases of children breaking down and taken away from schools of about nine or ten years of age and upwards.

101. Does it not occur to you that the anxiety of the playground might be equal to the worry of the school?—If you are serious in putting the question I must say that I do not think so.

102. *Dr. Fitchett.*] What remedy would you suggest: a diminution of the pass-system or a change in the method of payment?—One would be a diminution of the pass system; another would be a more judicious interpretation by Inspectors of their duties. I think the modern craze of testing everything by written examinations has got such a hold of the Inspectors that they have lost their common-sense. The teachers themselves cannot help it.

103. *The Chairman.*] But, speaking of breaking down, is the Committee to understand that you have seen children who had to be kept from school several days in the week in order to obviate this mental strain?—Yes; that is common.

*Mr. M. J. S. Mackenzie:* All I can say is that we have evidence here that such a thing is very rare. Perhaps the Chairman would read the evidence given on that point.

*Dr. Fitchett:* The Committee would hardly have for its object to put the opinion of one witness in conflict with another.

*Hon. Mr. Fisher:* It is necessary to have the independent opinion of each witness on the record, irrespective of position or the authority with which each of them might speak on the subject.

104. *The Chairman.*] But you have seen such cases of break-down?—Yes. I have said so; it is not uncommon. Then, as to the economical working of the Act, we had this subject before the Otago Board. They made a number of suggestions, under the impression that the capitation allowance was certain to be reduced, and that the school-age was to be raised. These recommendations were made, however, with very great reluctance. The Board was extremely sorry to have to make them; but it was considered desirable to be prepared. If teachers' salaries must be reduced, it is necessary that they should have three months' notice. Some members of the Board considered that the raising of the school-age and the lowering of the capitation allowance ought to be undertaken. Personally, I must say that I differ from them, because of the very great dislocation that the altered circumstances would cause. The difference between raising the school-age to six and seven years will also be a very material one. I can best illustrate that by quoting, as far as I can trust my memory, some figures. There are, roughly speaking, twenty thousand children on the school rolls in the Otago Educational District; between eighteen and nineteen thousand are to be numbered in the average attendance. Capitation is paid on about nineteen thousand. I think I am nearly right in that. The number of children under seven years of age, out of the twenty thousand on the roll, is four thousand; that is, two out of every ten children are under seven, so that raising the school-age will make a very material difference in our income. Raising it to six years would not be so material, for out of these four thousand there are only about twelve hundred children who are under six years; that is to say, less than one-third—speaking roughly—of the number of children under seven are between five and six years of age.

105. Are you speaking of the average?—We have no way of ascertaining the average of school attendance except through the number on the roll. I think it runs to about 1,175 for children under six years who are to be placed among the average attendance. The Board, as I have said, have made suggestions that may be acted upon if the school-age is raised and the capitation fee reduced. These suggestions are, slightly lowering the teachers' salaries, lowering the amounts to be paid as bonuses, lessening the grants to Committees, reducing various items of office and other expenditure.

106. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] Do you dissent from them or approve?—I approve of the way in which our straitened circumstances are to be met—if they are to be straitened—but I cannot say I approve of the policy of straitening them.