

- (2.) That in providing free primary education of the best description, and thus opening the gateways of knowledge to all alike, the State does all that it should be expected or allowed to do.
- (3.) That it is no more the duty of the State to provide what may be called the luxuries of education, than it is the duty of Charitable-aid Boards to provide luxuries of food and clothing for persons requiring help.
- (4.) That a more liberal provision for, and a better system of awarding, scholarships would give the poorer classes all the educational advantages of which they could profitably avail themselves.
- (5.) That the establishment of two universities (with the prospect of two more being shortly demanded) is, to say the least of it, premature, when all England, which contains half a dozen towns, each having a larger population than New Zealand, is satisfied with four.
- (6.) That such portions of the funds for supporting this system of higher education as are derived from land endowments are quite as much public money as that which is annually provided from the general revenue, and that this principle has been already recognised by making the reserves for primary education, no matter where situated, applicable to that purpose for the country generally.
- (7.) That, but for the diversion of so large a portion of the public funds to the establishment and maintenance of this system of higher education, there would be no necessity for crippling the primary schools by any further retrenchment.

I have, &c.,

JOHN SMITH,  
Inspector of Schools, Westland.

Mr. G. HOGBEN to the CHAIRMAN, Education Committee.

North Canterbury Board of Education, Christchurch,  
28th November, 1887.

SIR,—

I have the honour to reply to your communication of the 10th instant *re* the working of the Education Act, and in doing so must apologize for my delay, which has been caused by the incessant occupation entailed by duties in connection with the examination of schools.

1. In regard to the first point named, the raising of the age upon which the capitation allowance is paid, I am of opinion that it might without injury to the educational system be raised to six years. Children would lose nothing by this change in respect of future progress at school; but would be able to pass Standard I. just as soon as they do now. I notice no difference between children in the various standard classes who have entered at six under existing circumstances and those who have entered at five, except perhaps an advantage on the side of the former, due probably to the increased robustness gained by an additional year spent for the most part in the open air. To raise the age to seven would, however, have a different effect. The maturity of mind is sufficiently developed for steady work of a moderate amount, and a delay of a year at the start would in such a case involve the loss of a year all through the school course.

[As to the age of leaving school, see section 3.]

2. I do not think that it is desirable to exact fees from children in the higher standards, for the following reasons: (a.) One of the objects of the higher standards is, I take it, that the State should benefit as much as possible by the development of the intelligence of the children of good parts. Those whose parents are not in good circumstances would either be unable to pay, or the parents would have a stronger inducement to withdraw their children, say, on passing the Fourth Standard than they have at present; for even now it is most frequently the sharp pupils, especially the boys, who are taken away at an early age to fill situations of various kinds. (b.) Those who go to secondary schools already benefit to far more than the extent of any fees that could be charged for the higher standards in primary schools; for the average fee paid at secondary schools in the colony is about £10, and the average cost per head is about £27, the benefit received being therefore £17 as against £3 19s. per head. (See E.-1, 1887, pp. xx. and xxi.) Though the funds of the secondary schools are not for the most derived from consolidated revenue, yet they come from a public source, rents obtained upon lands set aside as educational reserves. (c.) A great difficulty has been experienced in many districts in England in regard to the collection of fees, and I do not consider that the difficulty would be less when the number of children was small in proportion to the amount gained thereby.

3. I have several suggestions to offer under this head, and for the sake of convenience I will arrange them in the order of the items named in Table N of the tenth annual report of the Minister of Education (E.-1, 1887, p. ix.).

(1.) *Boards' Administration.*—I would strongly advocate as the most important element in a policy of retrenchment such a measure as would include the abolition of Boards of Education. Probably little fault could be found with the spirit in which the Boards attempt to administer the Act, yet I look upon this item as to a large extent unnecessary. On a moderate estimate, probably £7,000 or £8,000 could be saved by the transference to the central department of most of the control and management now exercised by the Boards. This saving would be direct; but still more important would be the additional economy and efficiency brought about indirectly by such a change. The Boards have no particular interest in a policy of retrenchment, and, as far as I am aware, their present administration is more or less extravagant.

(2.) *Inspection and Examination.*—If Inspectors were the officers of the central department—as logically they ought to be—reports from them as to the need for expenditure would serve as a check upon the demands of local bodies. At present, the opinions of