

Inspector-General, and had taken into consideration suggestions not only from its own members, but from educational institutes and other bodies or individuals interested. As far as my own opinion is concerned, the following points seem to require the first attention: (a.) Restriction of pass subjects to reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic in Standards I. and II., and to the same subjects, with the addition of grammar and composition, in Standards III. to VI. (b.) A smaller number of class subjects to be required from teachers in small schools. (c.) Grouping of Standards IV. to VI., or any of them (when these classes are taught class subjects by the same teacher) for the same portions of those class subjects, alternation of work being provided for in a similar manner to that laid down in No. 17 of the Standard Regulations. (d.) The assigning of class marks upon all the subjects (pass and class) taught in a school, instead of upon the work in a few only.

I would lay particular stress on (a) and (b). The omission of drawing from the list of pass subjects is a matter almost of immediate urgency. Being different in character from the other pass subjects, it disturbs, instead of aiding, a classification based upon them. I believe that one of my colleagues, Dr. Anderson, has stated his opinions in regard to the syllabus at some length. With these opinions, in the main, I agree.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE HOGBEN,  
Inspector of Schools, North Canterbury.

J. G. Wilson, Esq., Chairman, Education Committee.

Mr. L. B. WOOD to the CHAIRMAN, Education Committee.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 26th November, 1887.

I have the honour, in accordance with your request, to submit my views on the topics mentioned in the circular issued by the Education Committee. I very much regret that the pressure of official duties at this time compels me to make my remarks somewhat brief.

1. I am opposed to raising the age upon which the capitation allowance is paid, for the following reasons:—

(a.) As injuriously affecting the moral and intellectual welfare of the children. By raising the age children would practically be excluded from the schools at an age at which it would be of inestimable advantage to a large proportion of them to be receiving training in habits of discipline and attention. Without early attendance at school the poorer population of our towns acquire habits which make their education afterwards a work of enormous difficulty. Further, the average at which the pupils pass the First Standard is at present something like nine years; and this on all sides is admitted to be much too high to permit of any but a small proportion remaining at school to receive the benefits of the instruction in the higher standards. To raise the age of admittance would make this proportion even smaller. I may here point out that early infant education appears of such importance to the Education Department in Great Britain that they make large annual grants to efficient schools in which the ages of the pupils range from three to seven years:

(b.) As diminishing the income of the Boards without effecting any corresponding diminution in the expenditure required to staff the schools. To make this point clear I take a practical illustration: By raising the age to six the capitation grant to the North Canterbury Board would be diminished by something like £4,000, while the circumstances of the schools are such that not more than £800 of a reduction on teachers' salaries could be made.

2. The payment of fees for higher standards: I have no strong opinion on this subject, but I may say that I would view with disfavour any change likely to reduce the numbers in the higher standards. There can be no doubt that a year in the Fifth or Sixth Standard is out of all proportion valuable when compared with the time spent in the lower standards. Most of our pupils who leave school at the Fourth-Standard stage are, I am afraid, but ill equipped to make any further progress in intellectual pursuits; whereas the youth who has received the more-bracing mental discipline of one additional year is much more likely to be confirmed in habits and tastes which will be cultivated with ease and pleasure in after years. Under our present system the poor man has to regret only the temporary loss of bread-winning power which he incurs by keeping his boy at school after he has been freed from the obligation to attend by passing the prescribed standard: impose fees, and there is a double burden to be borne.

3. The more economical working of the Act: Under this head it is possible to effect retrenchment and yet increase the efficiency of the schools in two directions:—

(a.) By reducing the number of subjects to be taught in the smaller schools, and allowing further grouping of classes than at present; thus making it possible to adopt a system of organization by which a single teacher could instruct a larger number of pupils (see under section 4):

(b.) By the abolition of the Boards. I am strongly of opinion that, were the Boards abolished, and the control of the schools centred in the department at Wellington, nothing but good would be the result. The Boards, constituted as they are by members elected by the School Committees, naturally intrust large powers to these bodies, and the friction that ensues, owing to this multiplication of control, greatly interferes with the efficiency of the system. I do not consider it advisable for me to enter here upon a criticism of the special case of my own Board, with the working of which I am of course best acquainted. I may, however, point out that, in the report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the unsatisfactory state of education in North Canterbury, published about eighteen months ago, evidence is not wanting to show that this Board discharged its duties in a manner far from satisfactory.

At present the administration of the Boards costs fully £10,000 per annum. I think I am within the mark when I say that their work could be done by the department for something like £3,000.

The changes necessitated by the abolition of the Boards would be—

(1.) The taking over the Inspectors by the department. This step has been advocated by every educationist in the colony. An additional saving would be effected by this change. How