

the necessities of work, the workers and the work must suffer. There are, besides, the two considerations that, if town children of the poorer class are not introduced to good associations at an early age, undesirable habits may be contracted or confirmed, and that, however small the educational benefit our children may receive in the schools between the ages of five and six (and I am bound to say it is not much more than barely appreciable), the change would still have a tendency to unfavourably affect the standard ages, already too high.

2. My sympathies are opposed to the payment of fees for the higher classes. I hold that as far as possible the poorer members of the community should, in respect of education, be placed on an equality with their richer neighbours, and that the sacrifice of the children's services during the continuance of their attendance at school should be the only special sacrifice involved. Again, difficulties in the collection and distribution of such moneys may be anticipated. A parent might, for instance, evade payment by keeping his children absent from a Fourth-Standard examination, and if the money be paid in for the schoolmaster's benefit the lower classes in his school might suffer.

3. Any substantial economy in the working of the Education Act, or any similar Act, must be mainly a matter of government and organization, and in these respects our New Zealand system is very faulty. So many considerations occur to me in this connection that it would be impossible to treat them at reasonable length. It may be sufficient to state the general conclusion that efficiency or economy, or both, would be promoted by—

(a.) Abolishing Education Boards, and placing the government of the schools directly in the hands of the Minister ;

(b.) Equalising the educational districts, and assigning each to the charge of an Inspector, who would act in conjunction with an Assistant- or Sub-Inspector ;

(c.) Requiring in the case of new buildings a local contribution of one-fourth of the estimated cost, and in the case of schools whose average attendance falls below any determined minimum a contribution towards the ordinary expenditure of a fixed sum inversely proportioned to the attendance ;

(d.) Imposing on the school reserves the burden of erecting, maintaining, and extending school buildings, with or without an annual subsidy from Parliament ;

(e.) Diminishing or totally abolishing the influence exerted by School Committees over the internal management of schools, particularly in connection with the appointment, dismissal, and removal of teachers, and confining their functions substantially to the care of buildings, the collection of such subsidies as may be required, and the general supervision over the teachers' conduct, which none but local residents are competent to undertake ;

(f.) Diminishing the number of separate School Committees, and giving the residents the option of electing at an annual meeting a single representative of their interests, or any odd number of representatives less than seven, at the same time abolishing the rule of cumulative voting ;

(g.) Exercising very fully powers of appointing, dismissing, and more especially of removing teachers from school to school, and paying them directly a salary of which the larger proportion shall be determined by the average attendance as at present. The smaller proportion might be determined by an improved system of classification, in which the work done from year to year should affect the teacher's status favourably or otherwise, or by a payment on the general class efficiency of his teaching as indicated below—the latter in preference as being the simpler mode, and not open to the objection that is now urged against a "bonus on certificates ;"

(h.) Altering the Syllabus in such a way as to permit of more class-grouping, and reducing in the case of the smaller schools the number of subjects now compulsory.

4. The whole subject of our standard Syllabus and the rules in connection with it requires revision. I presume we have adhered so tenaciously to a cumbrous system of individual passes in standards chiefly through the feeling that with a weak control over schools this was the only way of securing the efficient treatment of the subjects ; but with a strong administration, or even with the financial safeguard of a variation in the salaries of teachers dependent on their efficiency, the pass group of subjects may with safety be narrowed down to such as are found necessary to keep the classification of the pupils on a sound basis, and the remaining subjects may then be dealt with according to the circumstances of the schools in the way to secure the greatest economy of effort. At present a strict adherence to the rule of passing, as laid down in the regulations, would simply spoil the classification, and stands to a certain extent in the way of a convenient grouping for instruction. If an Inspector's examination is to do any real good, the classification for examination must substantially coincide with the classification for instruction, and it is not desirable that the child's position in the school should be determined, for instance, by his ability to draw without regard to his intelligence or capacity in other respects ; nor again is it desirable that in geography or in history there should be any obstacle in the way of combining the three highest classes for instruction in one section or period, and arranging a triennial rotation. Without entering into minor details I have to suggest in this matter—

(a.) That an individual examination be made by the Inspector of the four subjects of reading, spelling and dictation, writing, and arithmetic, and that the children be required to pass in these subjects only ;

(b.) That an individual examination be also made of the grammar and composition, and the result be recorded opposite the name of each pupil ;

(c.) That in the two lowest standards some weakness in one of the four subjects first mentioned may be disregarded, but not a serious failure ;

(d.) That in Standards III., IV., V., and VI. a similar weakness may be counterbalanced by evidence of capacity in the grammar and composition ;

(e.) That the subjects of drawing, geography, history, science, and object-lessons be examined in such a way as to test the general quality of the teaching, and that the result be recorded in terms of a percentage of efficiency ;