

change in the law would certainly lead to notable economies in our national expenditure on education.

Question 4: The present Syllabus is, in my opinion, fairly suitable for large schools, but it is in many ways unsuitable for the smaller ones. There is an almost unanimous consensus of opinion among teachers and Inspectors in favour of abolishing the teaching of history in Standard III., and I think this change should certainly be made without delay. I should also like to see the arithmetic prescribed for the higher standards curtailed by the express exclusion of discount, present worth, and stocks, and the cutting down of decimal fractions to the most elementary treatment. I think, too, that formal grammar should be made a class subject, and that much greater importance should be attached to composition, which should rank with any of the other pass subjects. In the smaller schools teachers should be allowed to group together classes in formal grammar, geography, and history with much greater freedom than is now permitted. This would allow of much more thorough teaching than is now possible, for at present teachers have to take these subjects in so many definitely-prescribed sections that there is often no time to teach any of them thoroughly enough to make the treatment educative. This is a point on which only experts can understand how completely doing many things is incompatible with doing much. I cannot enter into the matter here in detail, but I would respectfully impress on your Committee the great importance of not sacrificing a thorough training in the cardinal subjects of instruction to a fine and philosophical division of the subjects that are merely secondary and subordinate.

I have never been satisfied with the programme of history laid down in the Syllabus. It seems to me to proceed on wrong lines, to begin with the unknown and the remote, and work down to the known and the present. The reverse of this is surely the true order. I should like to see our pupils, in studying history, begin with recent times and with the institutions that they see around them, and, if time allows, work back to the times in which these institutions had their origin and growth. The following changes seem to me to be desirable. Standard III. history should be abolished. In Standard IV. the history of the last fifty years or so should be studied; in Standard V. the period from the Revolution to the present time should be covered; and in Standard VI. a sketch of the earlier history should be added.

The arrangements for teaching science are now and have always been unsatisfactory. The method of lecture or object-lesson is not suitable for a proper handling of this subject. We need a text-book that could be put into the hands of teachers and pupils, covering the whole ground. Until this is done science-teaching will remain more or less of a sham.

The kind of examination report now prescribed by the department is, in my opinion, very unsuitable: it hampers an Inspector far too much, and makes him little better than a machine. He has to hear so many routine things that, in the five or six hours which he can devote to the examination of a school, he has insufficient time to properly test the intelligence and educative quality of the higher parts of the teaching. In my opinion, no person who had any practical knowledge of the work of inspection would for a moment dream of prescribing such a form. All that is required or that serves any useful purpose is a percentage showing the results in the pass subjects, and a short written estimate of the intelligence of the work in the school, the Inspector being left to note merits or faults in the non-pass subjects according to his discretion and judgment. I have no hesitation in saying that the effect of Inspectors' examinations, as they have to be conducted to satisfy the requirements of the existing report form, is less stimulating and healthful than it was ten years ago, and that the machine-like routine which it enforces is a weariness to all connected with the conduct of the public schools of the colony.

I regret that the late arrival of your letter does not afford me time to revise this rough statement of my views, and make it more worthy the perusal of the members of your Committee.

I have, &c.,

J. G. Wilson, Esq.

D. PETRIE, Inspector.

Mr. ROBINSON to the CHAIRMAN, Education Committee.

SIR,—

Education Office, Greymouth, 21st November, 1887.

Replying to your circular of the 10th instant I have the honour to report as follows:—

1. Considering the matter apart from its financial effect upon this district, I approve of the proposal to raise the entrance-age to six years. Provision should, I think, be made whereby children not less than five years of age could be admitted to large town schools where the kindergarten system is in use upon a payment of a fee (?) not exceeding for the year the amount paid by Government as capitation for each child in average attendance. Regarding this question in connection with its effect upon the finances of this district, I cannot contemplate the possibility of such a step without serious apprehension. The revenue of the Grey Board from capitation is at present £4,844 per annum. The alteration of the entrance-age to six would reduce our revenue to the extent of £750, and the proposal of the Government to take off 5s. of capitation would deprive us of £250—a total of £1,000, or more than one-fifth of our revenue. The Board has lately reduced the salaries of teachers fully 10 per cent.; and the list of salaries herewith enclosed will, I think, show you that a further reduction is quite an impossibility. In view of the evident necessity for retrenchment, I regard the proposal of the Government as moderate and reasonable, provided they be accompanied by such changes as would prevent a very unfair inequality of effect upon different districts. Some districts could meet the difficulty by a very moderate degree of retrenchment. The Grey District, and possibly some others similar to it, would be virtually blotted out. In connection with this I will defer my suggestions until I reply to query 3.

*Reply to Query No. 2.*—I cannot express a very favourable opinion as to the payment of fees for the higher or any standards. One great objection to fees is that if payable at short intervals their collection entails both trouble and annoyance to the teacher. Their non-payment is also likely to cause disagreement between teacher and parent, and possibly undue harshness to the scholar. I