

1894.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: CONFERENCE OF SCHOOL INSPECTORS

(MINUTES OF).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

THURSDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 1894.

THE Conference met at the Education Board's Room, in Wellington, at 10 a.m.

Present : Messrs. Anderson, Airey, Bindon, Braik, Dickinson, Fleming, Goodwin, Gow, Goyen, Harkness, Hendry, Hill, Hodgson, Lee, Morton, Murray, Petrie, Ritchie, Smith, Spencer, Taylor, Wood, Rev. W. J. Habens (Chairman).

The Chairman addressed the Conference, and intimated what subjects were likely to be brought up for discussion, as follows :—

GENTLEMEN,—

My first duty is to thank you on behalf of the Minister of Education for responding to his invitation, and to express the hope that the efficiency of the system of public instruction in the administration of which we are engaged will receive an important impetus as the result of the deliberations of this Conference.

The main purpose of our meeting is defined in the circular* of the 8th March, 1893, which you have in your hands. That purpose is to secure "greater uniformity in regard to the valuation of the work of the schools, and to the interpretation of the various details of the standard regulations."

You have been invited to specify beforehand the subjects you desire to discuss, and the suggestions† you have severally made have been communicated to you all, and are now before you in a printed form. Mr. Petrie (paragraph 1), Mr. Braik (par. 1), and Mr. Hill (par. 2c and 2f) have submitted proposals that have a direct bearing on the main question of uniformity of inspection.

It is for the Conference to determine what other subjects it will take into consideration. The circular of the 8th March contains references to other subjects, and it was not unnatural that some of you should desire to avail yourselves of this opportunity of meeting to express an opinion upon them. Prominent among these other subjects is the question whether the Inspectors ought to be officers of the Department of Education, as the framers of the Education Act originally proposed, or officers of the Education Boards, as they are now. Dr. Anderson (par. 1), Mr. Wood (par. 1), and Mr. Hill (par. 3a) propose this subject for discussion. No Inspector proposes to deal with the question of "periodical or occasional exchange" as apart from the transference of the control from the Boards to the department. Nor is there in the proposals you have submitted any indication of a desire for an amplification of the code of instructions to Inspectors.

The proposal to bring the Inspectors into direct relation with the department is, in my judgment, a proposal to amend the Education Act; but you need not consider that as a reason for avoiding its discussion. The Minister has instructed me to inform you that he wishes you to exercise the fullest liberty in your choice of topics.

Coming now to subjects which are not alluded to in the circular, but which you have proposed for discussion, I observe that you are likely to devote much consideration to the regulations for the inspection of schools and to the syllabus included in these regulations. I suppose that before dealing with proposals for changes in the detail of the syllabus you will deem it advisable to consider the radical changes contemplated by Dr. Anderson (par. 2) and Mr. Petrie (pars. 2, 3, 4), who desire to do away with standard passes, except with respect to the standard pass required by section 90 of the Education Act, and (so far as Dr. Anderson's proposal goes) except with respect to Standard VI. Another radical change is suggested by Mr. Murray's question (par. 10), "Would the twofold classification system in reading and arithmetic be an advantage?"

There are several proposals with respect to the distinction between subjects in which the individual pupil should be examined and subjects in which class examination should suffice. Mr. Dickinson (par. 2) proposes that in large schools all subjects be treated as "class"-subjects, and individual pass be not required. Mr. Taylor (pars. 1, 2) submits a proposal with respect to the division of subjects as between "pass" and "class." Mr. Petrie (pars. 3, 6), and, apparently, Dr. Anderson (par. 3) contemplate the continuance of the distinction between "pass" and "class" after the abolition of standard passes. Mr. Morton and Mr. Wood (par. 2a) raise the question whether drawing shall be a "pass"-subject or a "class"-subject, and Mr. Wood (par. 2a) proposes to make geography a "class"-subject.

* See Appendix A, I.

† See Appendix A, II.