

1898.  
NEW ZEALAND.

## NELSON SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN STATE SCHOOLS.

(RETURN OF CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO.)

*Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 12th July, 1898.*

*Ordered, "That there be laid before this House a copy of all correspondence in reference to the complaint that the Nelson School Committees were infringing the Education Act in the matter of religious teaching."—(Mr. DUTHIE.)*

### No. 1.

MEMORANDUM for the SECRETARY, Education Board, Nelson.

I AM directed to send you an extract from a letter received by the Minister, in which it is stated that religious instruction is being given in the Nelson City Schools within school-hours, and to ask that the Board will be good enough to take the matter into consideration and advise him thereon.

E. O. GIBBES,

Education Department, Wellington, 12th November, 1897.

For the Secretary.

### Enclosure in No. 1.

EXTRACT.

"THE Education Act is now being violated regularly by direction of the Nelson Town Schools Committee by the giving of religious instruction within the regular school-hours. A petition was forwarded to the Committee at its meeting of May 17th (*vide Colonist* report, May 18th), signed by fifteen persons only, viz.: the Bishop, six ministers of religion (of whom two are members of the Committee), and eight women, several of whom are the wives of the above-mentioned clergymen, asking for religious instruction to be given. The consideration of the petition was postponed till the next monthly meeting. The *Colonist* newspaper, in an article on 22nd May, pointed out that to grant the request would be illegal. A rather violent letter in reply, by a reverend member of the Committee, followed in the same paper of the 25th May, with a rejoinder by the Editor in a sub-leader of the same date. At the monthly meeting, held July 19th (*vide Colonist* report of the 20th), the Chairman said the petition asking for religious instruction in the schools had been postponed to that meeting. From inquiries made, 414 parents had replied in favour of the proposal, seventy-three against it, and twenty-one were doubtful. Mr. Fathers moved that the prayer of the petition be granted, and that for one half-hour a week religious instruction be given in the schools; but the change be not effected in the Boys' Central and Girls' Central Schools until after the examination. Mr. Piper seconded the motion. The Rev. J. H. Mackenzie read a letter he had received from Wellington showing that religious instruction of unsectarian character was given in the schools of that city. The motion was carried unanimously."

"There are seven separate schools in Nelson City, and Mr. Fathers's motion therefore decided that religious instruction should be given forthwith in five of them, and in the other two after the examination."

### No. 2.

MEMORANDUM from the NELSON EDUCATION BOARD.

The Secretary, Education Department, Wellington.

I BEG to acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of the 12th ultimo, covering copy of an extract from a letter received by the Minister alleging that religious instruction was given in the Nelson City Schools during school-hours.

In reply I have the honour to inform you that your communication, having been laid before the Board, was subsequently forwarded, together with a letter from a Mr. S. S. Bolton, of Nelson, on the same subject, to the Nelson School Committee, with a request for an explanation. Enclosed herewith is a copy of the School Committee's reply.

15th December, 1897.

STEAD ELLIS, Secretary.