

in reference to school buildings?—I do not think so, if the circulars from the Education Department were to enumerate what work had to be done, and to state that the Boards would be held responsible for carrying out that work.

137. *Mr. Hardy.*] Mr. Sidey was trying to pin you to some circular issued by the Department, and asked you if that circular had been the cause of, I think he said, any irritation. Do you think that a circular issued only a few months ago would be likely to cause much irritation until its effects had been felt?—I do not know anything about the irritation caused by the circular.

138. He spoke about something taking place in North Canterbury, and he asked if any difficulty has arisen in consequence of the receipt of that circular. The question I want to put is this: As the circular has only recently been issued—?—In last February.

139. —and as the Boards have only recently acted on it, is there any likelihood of a difficulty arising so quickly?—I take it that the Boards have not acted upon it.

140. Oh, yes! Some Boards carry out the instructions loyally?—The Auckland Board is the only Board that has done so. I am judging by these figures.

Mr. Hardy: You are working on the wrong figures.

141. *Mr. Fowlds.*] The circular is dated February, and your figures refer to the period ending the 31st March?—The amounts total up the same.

142. I understand you condemn the basis of allocating the maintenance-money at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the cost of the buildings. You object to that?—I object because I do not think it is a correct basis.

143. What is the basis that you would go upon?—I have stated it. I took the valuation that is stated here in your return, and then I took the average attendance for New Zealand and divided the total value of the buildings by the average attendance at the schools.

144. And you got £8 5s.?—Yes. Then, assuming—I do not say it is a correct assumption, but it is the nearest that I know of, and I am prepared to accept it—assuming that thirty years constitutes the life of a school building, during the first six years after a school is erected there is no maintenance required. That leaves twenty-four years, during which time the £8 5s. has to disappear; and I say that if you divide the £8 5s. by 24 it should give the maintenance per year, or the upkeep—that is, the amount per head of average attendance. I have worked it out with reference to the London School Board, and I find that it comes to very nearly the same per head as it does in New Zealand.

145. You divide the £8 5s. by 24?—That gives the capitation.

146. That would be something under 8s.—never mind the exact amount. You would pay 8s. per head per year?—Eight shillings capitation. If you multiply the attendance—113,000—odd—by 8s. it will give you your maintenance grant per year.

147. And you would locate it on that basis?—You see you would have the same conditions as you have in the payment of teachers' salaries and grants to School Committees. You would have the same principle involved. Otherwise you have an uncertain factor if you take the basis the Committee recommends. My plan would give the same basis for every school in New Zealand.

148. But how would that apply in the case of buildings of a different class—brick and stone buildings—in different districts?—You could make two averages if you liked. It would not make any difference.

149. *Sir Edward Gibbes.*] The difficulty about the distribution by the Government of a special vote lies principally in the fact that School Committees and Inspectors and Boards are all actuated by the laudable desire to get the best school accommodation for their district, and when it is only a matter of asking the Government for money, naturally demands are made with very great freedom. And, although Mr. Hill is not aware of it, I can say that Inspectors of Schools show just as much desire to get good buildings and large sums of money for their districts as anybody else. Now, how is the Government in distributing a special vote going to get over that difficulty? That is really the difficulty that lies at the bottom of all the applications that have been refused. I have here just a few notes of some typical cases that have been refused, and perhaps Mr. Hill knows something about some of them. I will take the case of a school which was built, perhaps fifteen years ago—built on a very bad plan, built probably cheaply, and possibly for residential purposes, but which at all events has now become not worn out, but utterly unsuitable for use. It wants reorganization. The total area of the school building is still such that it is adequate for the attendance, but through deficiency in height of studs and unsuitability in the size of the rooms it has become an unsuitable building for the purpose. Who is going to provide for this? The Board, of course, ask the Government for a special grant. As Mr. Hill said, where there were 12 square feet of floor-space per child the Government was right in refusing a grant. Now, what is going to be done in a case of that kind?—I take that as a matter of renewal, if a district has a lean-to which has been provided simply because the Government would not give a grant as they ought to have done. I say the Government should have provided a building. It is a case where the Department has not done its duty.

150. But there are 12 square feet provided already?—That is, 12 square feet per child provided by adding a shed would, according to your own showing, be school accommodation.

151. No. That is a class of application that is made to the Government—that the school building has now become unsuitable on account of defective structure. Who ought to provide accommodation then?—If a building wants renewing, accommodation should be provided under the principle that is already recognised by the Committee. If there is a shed it is just the same; accommodation should be provided of a proper type. Evidently there has been some difficulty on account of the Department not giving grants at the proper time, and the Board has done the work out of maintenance.

152. Up to the end of last year there was no restriction as to applying money solely to maintenance. The Boards were at liberty to spend their money how they chose?—That is the point I am grumbling at the Department over. I say there should have been a real form of government.