

have been well built and well looked after, and the Board is inclined to think that the life of its wooden buildings could be extended by five years beyond the term set down here. That would only make a very slight saving—about £113. The parliamentary report makes no discrimination between schools over thirty years of age at all. It was thought that a $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. basis would be sufficient for schools of from thirty to thirty-five years, and then 10 per cent. for schools over thirty-five years of age. If a $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. instead of a 10 per cent. allowance were made for rebuilding and renewals of wood buildings of thirty and under thirty-five years old a slight saving would be made, which the Board could profitably use for general purposes, including additions.

21. Do you consider that the setting-aside of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. as a maintenance fund is a sound basis and is calculated to preserve our buildings for a longer time than hitherto?—As I state in this letter, as far as North Canterbury is concerned—and this is corroborated by the information first sent up to your Committee about a year ago—as far as the North Canterbury Board is concerned a 3 per cent. allowance would be sufficient. The original estimate of the clerk of works, after going over the expenditure for five years, is shown in the following telegram sent by the Board: “Difficult to arrive at cost of maintaining buildings owing to outlay on fencing, draining, and levelling, &c.; but architect estimates cost covering last five years as follows: Wood, a little over 2 per cent. per annum on cost of construction; brick, $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. This latter exclusive of repairing extensive damage by earthquakes. Experience as regards stone limited, but cost probably much the same as brick.” With regard to that 2 per cent., the Department asked afterwards “You state cost of maintenance of wooden buildings little over 2 per cent. per annum of cost of construction, brick $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. Do you include cost of maintenance for fencing, furniture, and outbuildings?” The Board replied, “Cost of fencing, furniture, outbuildings, and improving grounds not included. An addition of approximately 1 per cent. should be added to previous estimate to cover such items.”

22. Then, you maintain that if you erect a good building you require an extra percentage for maintenance?—No; a well-built and a well-looked-after building naturally will not cost so much to maintain in the long-run as a badly built building.

23. You maintain that the rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. should not apply to the whole of the school buildings of the colony?—As far as the North Canterbury schools are concerned, the Board thinks that perhaps a 3 per cent. basis would be sufficient, seeing that our schools are in good order.

24. You say that you could find funds for additions out of your general fund?—If the Board had liberty to spend that additional $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. as it thought fit for general purposes, including additions, it would answer all purposes. The Board would not require any larger grant. It only wishes for permission to deal with additions—for instance, a scullery for a teacher’s house, or a 5 ft. or 10 ft. addition to a school, or the lengthening of a room for a teacher. Under the regulations now the Board cannot even do this, and it feels the restriction more in these cases than, perhaps, in the case of new schools. In the case of new schools the Board is quite willing to be guided by its Inspectors, and not to make any applications for schools that the Inspectors do not think are necessary.

25. Have you made any calculation on a capitation basis—that is, have you taken into consideration the number of children present at the North Canterbury schools on an average and the amount of money allowed to you, divided the latter by the number of children, and seen what it came to per head?—Yes, I have made myself conversant with a table of that description, covering the expenditure on maintenance. I think that is what you refer to.

26. Yes?—I have a table here before me now.

27. I would like to know how you would find it tally with your present calculation—that is, do you think it would be a more equitable basis on which to give grants?—An average attendance rather than a percentage?

28. You understand that the circumstances in different districts are different. Yours is an older-settled district. In some districts the schools are wide apart and difficult for the Board to administer, and there are more frequent requests for new schools. Do you think that a grant on a capitation basis would be more equitable all round than under the present system?—I do not altogether think that a grant on a capitation basis works out fairly. Take a new district where the need for schools is continually increasing. I think a grant of a percentage on the cost of construction would meet the case. As far as our Board is concerned they work out practically the same, because when the Board’s architect submitted his estimate of about 3 per cent. as being about what was required, he took it from five years’ expenditure. So that one corresponds with the other.

29. Taking it on the cost of construction, one architect would build a school all of heart of timber—of the very best material he could get—while another architect would probably for a large portion of the building use second-class timber and inferior material. Under the present arrangement the capitation would be upon the cost of construction, whereas the inferior school would depreciate much earlier than the good one?—Yes, that is so.

30. Would you recommend that the system should remain as it is, under the district architects, or be placed under one general architect, who would see that the schools were all built soundly and properly?—I think there would be very great difficulty in having all the schools dealt with under one architect, owing to the large number to be attended to. But, of course, as far as Education Boards and School Committees are concerned, they benefit or suffer from the actions of their predecessors. Where a Committee, for instance, has not used its incidental fund carefully, the time eventually comes when the members get into trouble, not through their own fault, but their predecessors. It may be the same with Education Boards. I suppose those who follow have to put up with that. They inherit the legacy that has been left to them.

31. *Mr. Sidey.*] I understand, Mr. Lane, that you approve of the principle laid down by the Committee in their report—namely, that there should be a certain fixed sum given to the Boards, to be exclusively used for maintenance?—Exclusively used for maintenance?