

"That a national system of purely secular education is contrary to the conscientious convictions of Catholics, condemned by their religious principles, and repugnant to their Christian feelings."

Proposed by Mr. Crofts, delegate Invercargill, seconded by Mr. Connor, delegate Lyttelton :

Resolved—"That a system of purely secular education is not only unchristian and anti-Christian, but also impolitic, as calculated to impair the moral tone of the community, and render life and property insecure."

Proposed by Mr. John Carroll, delegate Napier, seconded by Mr. Connellan, delegate Cromwell :

Resolved—"That as Catholics conscientiously hold these principles and views, it is a grievous injustice to compel them to pay taxes for the maintenance of a purely secular system of education, and to submit to what is, in effect, double taxation, in consequence of having to maintain schools for the Christian education of their own children."

Proposed by Mr. A. White, delegate Christchurch, seconded by Rev. John Mackay, delegate Queenstown :

"Resolved—"That as citizens contributing their fair share to the public funds, Catholics are entitled to a fair share of the expenditure of these in support of education, and are consequently entitled in justice to aid to their own schools so long as public moneys are spent in the maintenance of education."

Proposed by Mr. F. Meenan, delegate Kumara, seconded by Mr. N. Malony, delegate Palmerston :

Resolved—"That a Petition, embodying these resolutions and praying for such change in the Education Act as will place Catholic schools on a footing of equality with Public schools, be sent to both Houses of Parliament, from and on behalf of this Aggregate Meeting."

Proposed by Mr. Cormack, delegate Roxburgh, seconded by Mr. Maher, delegate, Invercargill :

Resolved—"That the form of petition read be adopted, and signed on behalf of this Aggregate Meeting by the Chairman and delegates here present."

Proposed by Mr. Keppel, delegate Lawrence, seconded by Mr. Roach, delegate Invercargill :

Resolved—"That this Petition be entrusted for presentation in the Legislative Council to the Hon. Dr. Grace, and in the House of Representatives to Mr. J. C. Brown, member for Tuapeka, and that the Chairman be requested to have copies duly signed and forwarded to these gentlemen."

Proposed by Mr. John Scanlan, seconded by Mr. M. Meenan, delegate Tinker's Gully :

Resolved—"That the Most Rev. Dr. Moran do now vacate the chair, and that Mr. A. White be called thereto."

Proposed by Dr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. Crofts :

Resolved—"That the marked thanks of this Aggregate Meeting be tendered to the most Rev. Dr. Moran, for taking the chair at this meeting."

The most rev. chairman then addressed the meeting as follows :—

#### LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—

This aggregate meeting has been called for the purpose of agitating the Education Question and of adopting a petition to Parliament on the subject. It is very gratifying and encouraging to find that this call has been so well responded to. This is eminently a representative assembly, the Catholics of New Zealand may be said to be here present by their delegates, and it can with truth be said that to-night sixty-five thousand Catholics ask justice, and demand the repeal of the law, which compels them to pay for the establishment and maintenance of anti-Catholic and godless schools, and practically imposes on them a double taxation for education purposes.

On this important occasion it may be permitted me, as your Chairman, to review the state of the question. We have a grievance and a very great and serious grievance; and it is only right and proper that the public should be in no doubt as to what it is we complain of, and what it is we want. A plain statement as to facts and principles will make all this clear.

A system of education prevails at present in New Zealand, under which secular education in Primary, Normal, and High Schools, and in an University is provided at the public expense for all who can conscientiously avail themselves of it. In the case of primary Normal Schools education is entirely free, in the High Schools and the University partially so. But no provision whatever is made for the education of those who cannot conscientiously avail themselves of godless education, although the law compels these to pay equally with their fellow citizens for its establishment and maintenance.

This is a species of legislation that is contrary to justice and policy, and affords evidence of the tyranny with which a majority in this country treats a minority. But unjust and impolitic as this is, it is not all. At an expense of tens of thousands of pounds Catholics have established and maintained schools of their own entirely at their own expense, because they are conscientiously convinced that any system of education not founded on, guided, and informed by religion must inevitably lead to the detriment of individuals, and the ruin of society. And what, in the presence of this conviction, a conviction resting on the teaching of Christianity, and confirmed by experience, is the intent and policy of the present system of education? This intent and policy is the annihilation of all denominational and private schools, and the establishment of an odious and ruinous monopoly, which judged by the teaching of experience, can only result in a low mediocrity in scholastic attainment, not to speak of its irreligious and immoral consequences.

But, how, it may be asked, is it proved that the intent and policy of the present system of education is the destruction of all denominational and private schools, and the establishment of a monopoly in the hands of Government. To every man capable of forming a judgment on the subject this is evident. Is it not clear that denomina-

tional and private schools, unaided by public funds, cannot, humanly speaking, live in competition with Government schools planted everywhere, and entirely maintained by public funds? And, in point of fact, with the exception of the schools of Catholics, with whom the question is one of religion, it may be said that all other denominational and private schools have disappeared before the godless schools. Legislation could have done nothing more efficacious towards the annihilation of denominational and private schools, and the establishment of a Government monopoly of education than it has done by enacting that the educational system of the country shall be free, secular, and compulsory.

Nor is this all. Not satisfied with employing the most efficacious means of destroying denominational schools, which is supplied by absolutely free schools—schools free in their erection, free in their maintenance, free from all control of religion, free from dependence on God, the Sovereign Lord and Master; free from parental control, so free that no minister of religion, no individual father, mother, or guardian, may dare to enter there; this legislation further endeavours to crush all attempts, at establishing denominational schools, by severe taxation. Catholic schools, for example, are taxed as if they were private property, as if their managers were making a fortune out of them, whereas the fact is these are obliged to submit themselves to large pecuniary sacrifices on their account. It is not enough for the legislation of this country to compel Catholics to pay for the support of a system of education which they abhor, and of which they do not, and never will avail themselves, but in addition it insists that they must pay heavy taxes for being so audacious as to have a conscience, and generous and manly enough to maintain Christian schools to save their children from the dangers to faith and morals inseparable from godless education.

But not only is this legislation unjust, tyrannical, and highly penal, but it is also odiously hypocritical. It pretends to be impartial and liberal, by handing over school administration to local Boards and Committees. What, however, is the result? Catholics have no part in the administration either as members of Boards and Committees, or as teachers. Nor is this altogether the fault of Catholics themselves. True, Catholics are unwilling to take any part whatever in working the Government system; but this is entirely beside the question; our complaint is that the law, with full fore-knowledge of the state of things, leaves it in the power of the majority to exclude all Catholics, solely on the ground of their being Catholics, from school Boards and committees, and from the teaching staff—a power which as experience proves, the majority has not been unwilling or slow to use. Two cases in point will explain my meaning and illustrate it. (a) A Catholic lady applies for the situation of Head Mistress which happens to be vacant in a public school. She does so in answer to an advertisement inviting applications, and making no reference to religion. She and others who had applied are examined as to qualifications. She is found to be the most highly qualified. The person whose business it is to do so, announces this fact to his committee, adding, however, that she is a Catholic. Why? According to law Catholics are eligible, and the advertisement did not say, Catholics should not apply. Why? With reason, indeed, the question may be asked. The committee although a good deal disconcerted by the candour of their Head Master, are, however, quite equal to the occasion; the matter is referred back to him, with a mild censure for introducing the question of religion, that is with a make-believe of impartiality. The result is the Head Master recommends a less qualified person who is a Protestant; and the less qualified Protestant is appointed. The action of the committee deceives no one. The highly qualified Catholic is rejected because she is a Catholic, and the less qualified Protestant is elected because she is a Protestant. This case occurred here some years ago, but it is an apt illustration of the tone and temper of the present time. Under similar circumstances the same would be done to-morrow.

Here is another case. (b) A grammar school has lost its Head Master. The committee advertises for a successor. Several applications with testimonials are sent in. The committee meet. Two of the applicants seem eligible, their testimonials are satisfactory, their qualifications seem sufficient. But one of the committee smells popery in the names of these gentlemen, and the consequence is they are both rejected without any further consideration because they have the misfortune of having what the committee regarded as Catholic names. And the legislation, that not only permits but authorises all this, claims to be wise, just and impartial. What a farce, what a hypocrisy!

But though I mention these matters to condemn them and to show the real tendency of public education in this country in regard to the nature of its administration, I do not rest our objection to free, secular, and compulsory education on such grounds. Our chief objection to this system arises from its inherent dangers to faith and morals. This is a view at which you have often looked, and on which you long ago made up your minds. On this occasion, then, it is unnecessary to occupy your time in discussing it. You came here, not to hear arguments to convince you of this truth, which you long since learned from the teaching of the Holy See and your own experience, but to adopt measures for obtaining justice from the Legislature, which ought to represent you on this question, but which unhappily grossly misrepresents you. It may not, however, be amiss to mention two cases illustrative of our contention, which have been reported to us from Victoria. (a) A girl comes to a Catholic School from a Government school. She reads and writes well, can cast up accounts, but to the question, "Who made the world," she answers in blank surprise—"I do not know." Send your children to the free secular and compulsory schools, and when you ask them "Who made the world," or "Who redeemed them," so far as their education has anything to say to the matter, they will answer you—"We do not know." (b) A Protestant mother comes to a priest, asks him to take into his school her children, who are pupils in a free secular and compulsory school, adding, "if I leave them there they will treat me like a dog." And I say to you, send your children to Government schools and they will treat you like dogs.