

**N.Z. CATHOLIC FEDERATION**

**HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE DOMINION COUNCIL.**

The half-yearly meeting of the Dominion Council of the N.Z. Catholic Federation took place at the Catholic Clubrooms, Wiltshire Buildings, Christchurch, on Wednesday, February 20, 1918. There were present the following delegates:—Auckland—Rev. Father Cahill, Mr. J. T. Fitzgerald. Wellington—Rev. Father Hurley, S.M., Major Halpin, Mr. W. M. Luxford. Christchurch—Rev. Father Kerley, S.M., Messrs. F. J. Doolan and S. J. Ryan. Dunedin—Rev. Fathers O'Donnell and Morkane, Mr. D. L. Poppelwell. Dominion executive—Major O'Sullivan, Messrs. W. F. Johnson and J. A. Scott. Secretary, Mr. Geo. Girling-Butcher.

His Lordship Bishop Brodie was present, together with the clergy of the Christchurch parishes. An apology was received from Mr. T. J. Hussey for non-attendance. The president (Mr. D. L. Poppelwell) occupied the chair, and spoke in the following terms:—

Before making a few comments on the work of the past half-year I would like to offer a hearty welcome to the members of the Dominion Council upon this our tenth half-yearly meeting. The presence of so many delegates from so far afield indicates the keen interest which members are still taking in the affairs of the Federation, and shows that our Catholic representative body is serving the purpose for which it was formed. I deeply regret to say that there is a wave of sectarian bigotry sweeping over the Dominion at present. Why our enemies should be thus doing the devil's work is not clear. Nothing has happened to justify this ebullition of bitterness. I am satisfied, however, that in the long run this beating of the Orange drum will only result in the strengthening and solidifying of our Federation. The public realise that we attack no person's religious convictions, but are out for constructive work and the uplifting of the social and religious life of the whole community. One thing is certain—namely, that the work of the Federation is causing the people of New Zealand to think, and thinking is frequently followed by the examination of the facts, which cannot but result in a better understanding of the soul and purpose of our organisation. Continuing, Mr. Poppelwell referred to the events of the past half-year, notably the significant trend of the best opinion in the Dominion towards the Catholic principle of religious education. Briefly touching upon the war, with all its terrible tragedy and deluge of blood, and to the appeal of our Holy Father the Pope to the belligerent nations for a honorable and lasting peace; the speaker congratulated the Federation upon its good work in connection with the Catholic field service fund. Treating of conscription of clergy and teachers, he said: Owing to the action of the Upper House in throwing out the provision for the exemption of teachers from military service we are unfortunately in the same position as last year regarding the conscription of our clergy and religious teachers. In practice things have no doubt improved, but of course the law may at any time be enforced against both priests and teachers. In this connection perhaps it would not be out of place to put on record some figures concerning the position of the teachers in the public

schools as compared with our schools. These figures are compiled from the *Year Books* for the years 1915 and 1916 (the latest available), and may be therefore taken as official.

	Year 1914.	Year 1915.
	Public Catholic Schools.	Public Catholic Schools.
1. Total Primary School pupils	173,470	183,214
2. Number of adult male teachers	1,628	1,591
3. Number of pupils per male teacher	106	115
4. No of female teachers	2,820	3,077
5. Percentage of male teachers	36	34
6. Percentage of female teachers	64	66

From the above it will be seen that the State schools had one male teacher for every 106 pupils in 1914, and one for every 115 in 1915, while for the same years Catholic male teachers were only one to 213 and 264 respectively. Now I am finding no fault with the proportion of male teachers (about 35 per cent.) in the public schools, but am assuming that it is a fair proportion for efficiency. That it is not too high is evident by the fact that the Education Boards are frequently complaining of the difficulty of getting enough male teachers. That being the case our proportion (only about 10½ per cent.) is surely necessary for the effective staffing of our schools. As a matter of fact if the Government's standard is a correct one we should have more than double our present number of male teachers. Is it not absurd, then, to send away any of the few we have?

To put this matter another way, we have been carrying on our schools for the years in question on a very economic basis as regards man power. We have been employing nearly 90 per cent. of women and only 10 per cent. of men to do as effective work as the Government schools which employ only 65 per cent. of women and 35 per cent. of men. If the State did its work on the same economic basis as we do, it could on its figures for 1914 have released 814 men, or if we take the figures of 1915, 897 men, and would still have proportionately as many male teachers as we have. A little study of this matter should, I am sure, convince any person of the justice of our claim to have our male teachers exempted from military service. In the present position we can only continue to assert our view and rely on getting fair play from the Military Service Boards.

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