

Large numbers of country settlers cannot afford to send their children to the secondary schools in the towns, and are beginning to look to the establishment of district high schools as the one means by which their families can have the advantages of superior education. It is well that this feeling should prevail. It is a feeling that should be fostered. It will not be well if some time hence the people of New Zealand can be described—as another people have been described by one of themselves—as “the most common-schooled and the least cultivated people in the world.”

The instruction in the higher branches should be carried so as to interfere as little as possible with the elementary department of the schools. Pupils should be eligible for the higher instruction when they have passed the Fourth Standard. It is, in my opinion, desirable that they should have reached the age of twelve years—and here we have the authority of Mr. Matthew Arnold to guide us—but I do not look on this as a point of such vital importance as it is when children have to enter the higher schools through the ordeal of a competitive examination.

In a future report I will state how I consider the schools should be worked, and I will try to give an estimate of the probable cost, and to indicate how the cost may be met.

I have, &c,

18th August, 1882.

R. J. O'SULLIVAN, Inspector.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report respecting the probable cost of the district high schools proposed to be established in the Waikato at Cambridge and Hamilton.

It will be necessary in each case to secure the services of an assistant qualified to teach the higher branches. Such teachers can, I think, be procured at salaries ranging from £150 to £250 a year. I do not think that more than £200 need be paid at present. No more than one teacher will be directly required, but possibly some slight addition to the staff of the district school may be wanted. There will be, of course, some incidental expenses for maps and the like. As the high schools will bring but few additional pupils the expense for desks is not likely to be great. Eventually some expenditure for buildings may be required, but that need hardly be taken into account at present. As regards funds, I do not think the capitation allowance should be taken into account, as it is not likely to be much increased by the high school, and the cost of the district school will certainly not be lessened.

As regards fees, I think there should be but one class of fees. It is not desirable that very young children should be tempted to seek admission. The fee should, it appears to me, be at the rate of £8 8s. per annum, this to include the cost of stationery. It is, I believe, probable that these schools are entitled to a part of the revenue from the reserves for secondary education. If the Board think it desirable to establish these schools, it will be necessary to obtain the express sanction of the Minister of Education, and to frame rules for the collection of fees and other matters.

A memorandum *re* the proposed schools at Cambridge and Hamilton is appended: Hamilton promises to send forty-three pupils, but some of these are rather young. Assume thirty at £8 a year or £2 a quarter; cost of teacher, say, £200; sundry expenses, £20.—Cambridge promises to send thirty-six pupils. Assume that thirty are sent, paying £8 a year or £2 a quarter each; cost of teacher, say, £200; sundry expenses, £20.

I am, &c.,

R. J. O'SULLIVAN, Inspector.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

New Plymouth, 4th January, 1883.

I have the honour to transmit my report on the public schools for the year 1882, together with the usual record of passes.

Occurrences during the past year have caused me much anxious thought, knowing, as I do, individually a large proportion of the parents and pupils making use of your schools.

Something is wanting to complete the present system of education. Intellect is to a certain extent cultivated; conscience is left dormant. I consider that the average age for leaving school is about fourteen, and from this class of youths are recruited the disturbers of public reunions and offenders against good manners. No inducements are offered them to continue their studies, or to cultivate refining and elevated tastes. In the streets alone do they find means of meeting their fellows; and, forgetting the little knowledge they may have picked up at school, they learn what in future years proves their ruin. I have been utterly astonished at the rapidity with which the knowledge picked up in school has been forgotten. Pupils whom I knew fully able to pass into the High School twelve or eighteen months ago, I have been obliged to leave in the lower division, showing, as I stated in my last report, that the knowledge gained in your schools is to a great extent superficial. The pupils are driven through the various class books, without any attempt at weekly repetition lessons, which I referred to in my last report. It is very seldom I find anything in which I can agree with the late Earl of Beaconsfield, but in one of his speeches he said: “The spirit of the Constitution would absorb the best of every class, and not let them fall into a democracy, which is a tyranny of one class, and that the least enlightened.” The state of things his Lordship refers to has not, in my opinion, attracted sufficient attention. His Lordship goes on to refer to a question which indicates trouble to the present generation, and will seriously embarrass the next. He says: “Having dismissed the sanctions that appeal to the higher feelings of man, is our scheme of government to degenerate into a mere system of police? I see nothing in such a result but corruption of nations and the fall of empires.” I conceive the authorities in charge of the education of our youth should reflect on this ominous utterance, though it does come from a quarter I never have had much faith in.

In close connection with what I have stated, I wish to refer to the last two clauses in Mr. Inspector O'Sullivan's report, dated the 31st December, 1881, because they exactly express my feelings on the subjects therein referred to, so much so that I should have liked to have inserted them in this paper. Another source of disquietude to me is the serious irregularity of attendance of the pupils, even in some of your best-managed schools. Last year I reported that it was improving: it has not continued