

132. But would not the cost, whether to the State or the people, be greater than now?—I do not see why it should be, because the same amount would be given at any rate, and no more, if the number of children was the same.

133. But if the large schools, which more than pay their way with the present capitation, were broken up into three or four, would not the total cost be larger, wherever the money came from?—I do not think so, because the number of assistants, pupil-teachers, and so on in the large schools tend to increase the expenditure quite as much as having more but smaller schools. I would not venture to give a distinct opinion as to the difference of cost, having never calculated it.

134. In Dunedin we have five or six thousand children, for which we receive only £24,000 a year. The cost is only about half, leaving the surplus to be divided amongst the small country schools. Supposing each body had its own school in that city—perhaps there would be twenty or twenty-five of them—do you not think the money received from the State would barely cover the cost?—It appears to me that, if in large schools children cost £4 a head to educate, it would not be more expensive to divide them. I do not think large schools reduce the cost.

135. Do you know under the present system what is a paying or a non-paying school to the Education Board? For a school with thirty children the capitation grant is £120; the school does not pay because we cannot keep it going for that. We have hundreds of schools with less than thirty, and consequently all losing concerns, and we have to draw on the surplus from the larger schools to keep these small schools going. Well, what I wish to prove is that if these large schools were broken up into several small ones there must be a considerably greater expense to the State. You said you do not approve of mere reading the Bible?—I did.

136. In sparsely-settled districts, how would you meet the difficulty? The teacher would have practically to be the nominee of the strongest body, perhaps of one or two settlers only. Then, he would have to give religious instruction as prescribed by his patrons?—I never intended that the mere schoolmaster should give the religious instruction there, but that the ministers of different denominations might have access at certain times to give religious instruction. This would be only in the small country schools.

137. That would mean three-fourths of the schools in the colony. You think the present system is detrimental to the well-being of the people?—I do.

138. Have you had any experience of the effects of a purely secular system and of a religious system in after life upon the people?—My reading is pretty extensive on this kind of subjects. I am pretty fairly conversant with the irreligious school system of France. During the many years it has been in existence it has turned out a lot of infidels and communists. I get that experience from reading, but I am quite capable of thinking out these matters for myself. My own conviction is that to bring up human beings without any religion whatever is necessarily to weaken the whole moral character of men, and therefore to make them bad citizens. In Greece, Rome, and every ancient nation that I have read of, there was always some religious instruction, and young people were brought up to fear some supreme being or deity who was to punish wickedness and injustice. It is something almost novel that a system of education should be established where religion is absolutely banished. I think the world has never had experience of such a thing.

139. Have not the poor in France, as a rule, always been educated in schools under the direct control of the clergy?—I am speaking of the lycées and schools under the management of the Government, from which religion has been banished.

140. But nearly all the schools in France for teaching the poor have been generally under the control of the clergy?—I am afraid not, not in the large towns. I lived some years in France, and I know there were many schools where there was no religious instruction.

141. Have you had any experience in the management of schools to enable you to judge the comparative results of religious and absolutely secular schools, or is it merely theory?—I have had a good deal to do with schools in superintending and arranging them. I started myself the two schools I spoke of here in Wellington, and I have taught in schools when a younger man.

142. Have you had any experience of schools for a number of years taught exclusively under the secular system?—No.

143. *Mr. Turnbull.*] The population in the towns being larger, would you first limit your system to the towns?—Possibly. It would be difficult to establish where there were small numbers.

144. As to building schools in large towns, the Catholics have built whole schools without any contribution from the State?—I believe they have.

145. That would be a great saving to the State if it were laid down as a condition that there should not be less than one hundred children to a school, and that the different bodies should erect their own schools?—I do not see why a special tax should be laid on a religious body. If the State is to build the school for the secularists, why not for the Roman Catholics or for us?

146. But, entirely to prevent your system running to excess, should there not be some such condition to prevent the number of denominational schools being too large, and consequently the expense to the State?—The Government should be quite satisfied the school was necessary, if it was to be built with Government funds. Before it was started the Government should be satisfied there were sufficient numbers to warrant its being carried on.

147. You would not make any attempt to lower the standard?—Certainly not.

148. So the State would get all it pays for?—Exactly.

149. And you propose to teach something essential besides?—That is what I mean.

150. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] You are really in favour of what is usually called denominationalism?—That is really what I mean, although there is a prejudice against the word.

151. Further, you think religious instruction in schools should only be given by the clergy or persons appointed by them?—Quite so.

152. Does your reading extend to the German system of education?—Many years ago I read Cousins's Report of the German system, and I have read occasionally on the subject since, but I do not know exactly how the matter stands there now.