

permissive power of having Bible reading should be given to the local Committees; in the third place, I should like to see the question seriously considered whether the Wednesday afternoon of each week should not be given up so that ministers and others duly accredited might, in their own way and in their own, or in the school buildings, just according to their own consciences, impart religious instruction. My reason is that ministers and churches are blamed, I am quite aware, for not doing their duty in imparting religious education. I find it is practically impossible to do it. The children are under high pressure. The home lessons and the work of the school become so exacting that often there is no time left, and there is no brain-power or fitness left. Saturday afternoon is a most inconvenient time for parents. I should very much like to see tried the giving-up of Wednesday afternoon in this way. I observe it is done in some superior schools, *e.g.*, the Wellington College, where there is a holiday every Wednesday afternoon. I do not see why that might not be tried as regards the primary schools. These are the only alterations I should like to see in the Act.

465. *Hon. Mr. Reynolds.*] You would have no objection to any religious denomination having State aid?—That could not conscientiously avail itself of the public system.

466. Who is to decide as to conscience?—Themselves.

467. Not the Government?—By no means.

468. Do you think the Wesleyans would take advantage of that permission—in cities, for example?—I am satisfied personally, were those concessions I have referred to made, no such application would be made by us; but, if the present secular system is maintained intact, I am not prepared to say, in my judgment, it is not improbable. There is a growth, in my opinion, of feeling in this direction; but, as this is purely a matter of opinion only, I wish to be exceedingly careful how I speak on behalf of the Church to which I belong.

469. Do you know the feelings of other denominations in the matter; for example, do you know the Episcopalian body would go in for denominational education?—Well, I think myself, if this were allowed—Bible-reading optional with the Committee, together with anything like a provision for an afternoon a week to be set apart—I do not think myself, to any considerable extent, the Episcopalian Church would then object to the present system.

470. Do you know sufficient of the Presbyterian Church to give an answer with regard to them?—Only just my own opinion, which is that they would welcome the present system then, and would never dream of establishing different schools of their own.

471. Then you would give grants-in-aid to Freethinkers as well as to other religious denominations?—I am prepared to abide by my statement—to any who have conscientious objections, and they should decide that for themselves.

472. *Mr. Swanson.*] Would you propose that the Bible should be read in the schools by the scholars verse about by the teacher, or how?—I have no particular feeling as to the mode; I would leave that in the hands of the teacher to provide what selections should be read.

473. Would you recommend that passages be selected, or have indiscriminate reading?—I would recommend that the common-sense of the teacher be trusted in the matter; I would leave it to him.

474. How would you propose to utilize the Wednesday afternoon in a large school?—As far as the schools are concerned, my proposition would be to close them all on Wednesday afternoon.

475. And let each denomination use their own or other buildings?—Just as they might arrange. For instance, in Nelson we found no serious difficulty in closing the schools an hour earlier on Wednesday afternoon, as we could do under the present Act, where all the Protestant clergymen were at that time on the Committee. We secured the four hours of teaching required by the Act; and we were able to agree amongst ourselves, and we selected the Provincial Hall and gave religious instruction there as per agreement betwixt ourselves as ministers.

476. You think the present system might go on with satisfaction to your society, provided the Wednesday afternoon were given for that purpose? I think so. I say, again, it is satisfactory now even as it is to a considerable proportion of our people, who are prepared to accept the Act just as it is, and would make no concessions to anybody.

477. Who would oppose the Wednesday afternoon proposal?—Yes; who would oppose any alterations for fear of interfering with the present Act. But there are a considerable number I know who would approve the suggestions I have made.

478. You are in favour of national education?—Yes.

479. Do you not think that giving grants-in-aid would have the effect of weakening the present system?—I do not. I think all the talk about the thin end of the wedge and so forth is mere chaff.

480. Well, as the Episcopalians and the Catholics are the large majority of the people, if their clergy are to be trusted as representing the people, they insist on denominational education. Well, if they got half the money granted to them, without speaking of other denominations, could we carry the Act on as we are?—My own opinion is that if Bible-reading were permitted in schools, and opportunity given for imparting religious instruction by the clergy or others in the way I suggest, that the great bulk of the Anglicans throughout the colony would accept the national system. No doubt it would be as you say if the Anglicans were to avail themselves of grants to any large extent.

481. I apprehend that the subsidizing of any denominational schools means that the clergy should have the appointment and dismissal of the teachers?—Not necessarily or exclusively the clergy. It has never been so with us.

482. But the denomination would?—Yes.

483. And the State would have the pleasure of paying them.—Yes.

484. Would it not, then, be in effect, whatever the theory might be, that if the State paid the schoolmaster a good salary, that would be all the salary he would get?—My own feeling is that what the State wants to see is a certain amount and quality of education.