

544. Their schools you believe to have been efficient?—I have understood so.

545. Have you any experience outside the colony of the working of a national system?—Only from what I have gathered from papers. I have taken great interest in the Victorian system, for the simple reason that ten years ago I was as strongly opposed to Bible-reading in schools as anybody—I was pronounced as a secularist. I watched with the keenest interest the progress of the movement in Victoria; but when I saw what I considered to be secularism run mad—when I saw Professor Pearson, acting under the department, eliminate any reference to the very name of God and Christ from the school books—I am not ashamed to say I was brought to a standstill, and I felt compelled to change my opinions. I have thus watched the system with a good deal of interest, but I have had but little opportunity of personally becoming acquainted with any other system than our own.

546. You believe, then, there is a better side to man's nature, which needs to be cultivated by religious instruction?—Yes.

547. Have you heard that legislation is at this moment impending in Victoria with a view to preventing certain evils in connection with young females which develop themselves in connection with the national system there?—No; I am not aware of that.

548. Not as a mere matter of public report?—No.

549. You think, with the exception of the alterations you suggest, the Act still works very well?—I think so.

550. And that the amount of secular instruction given is of a satisfactory character?—I think so—almost too satisfactory.

551. *Hon. Mr. Acland.*] You think where any number of persons or any denomination establish a school of their own, which is submitted to public inspection, and satisfies the Government as regards secular instruction, it would be entitled to a grant?—Personally I would not object to that.

552. You think they would have a claim to it?—Yes.

553. As to Wednesday-afternoon instruction it might be given in rooms belonging to the different denominations, or in the public school-rooms if arrangements could be made?—Yes.

554. You consider Saturday practically useless for giving religious instruction?—I find it is so.

555. It would set the children against religion?—Yes; I think so.

556. Do you think the present system has a tendency to increase absolute scepticism?—I think so in certain classes—those who are not reached by the Churches, but lie outside the reach of the Sunday-schools.

557. But where they can be brought under that influence that can be averted?—Yes; I think in the case of that section of the day-scholars who cannot be got into the Churches or Sunday-school it has that tendency.

558. *Hon. Mr. Hart.*] Are you aware that Dr. Moran has said that, if Bible-reading were introduced in the public schools, all the Catholic teachers would be compelled to leave them?—I am not aware of that.

559. *Hon. Dr. Menzies.*] I understood you to say just now that the acquisition of religious knowledge by children in schools is secondary to the acquisition of secular knowledge?—I never wished to convey that impression. Of course, I conceive that the moral and religious education of the young is of vastly more importance than secular training to the child.

560. In other words, do you consider that religious knowledge should be the basis of all instruction?—I consider that to be the case.

561. *Mr. Barron.*] Then, if it should be found impossible for the State to get the agreement of the majority in the State to a system of instruction which would include Bible-reading instruction, and it became necessary to abandon the present system, do you think that the denominational system should be encouraged by the State?—Well, seeing that I do not believe such an alternative either probable or necessary, I think it is scarcely needful for me to answer the question, as my whole conviction runs the other way. I think what I have suggested would have a tendency to build up the present system, not do destroy it.

562. You are aware the difficulty has been to get people to agree what "religious instruction" means?—I object to religious instruction becoming any part of State education myself. All I ask for is the day-schools to be closed one afternoon in the week, leaving all else to be done outside the day-schools. This would enable the ministers and Churches to do it.

563. You are still of opinion that if the State must have some system of education it should impart general knowledge only, than have no system of education at all?—Yes; I think so.

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WEDNESDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1883.

Mr. S. E. SHRIMSKI, M.H.R., examined.

564. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are aware there has been a large number of petitions to Parliament this session in reference to the subject of education. You know generally the subject of those petitions?—Yes.

565. You are a member of the Hebrew persuasion?—I am.

566. How many Jews are there in New Zealand?—According to the last census 1,535, I believe.

567. Do your people take advantage of the State system of education?—They do.

568. They have no conscientious objection to their children attending the State schools?—Not the slightest.

569. Do you believe in secular education?—We do.

570. Then, are you opposed to the Bible being read in the State schools?—We are.