

795. And you would have the power of dismissal in the other way?—Yes.

796. In some thinly-populated districts it would be impossible for a good many denominations to keep up schools?—If we had the assistance that we ask for we should be able to have a great many more schools than we have.

797. *The Chairman.*] Have you any statement now to make?—I think the question has been pretty fully sifted already, but there are one or two reflections that I might make. The State, I understand, has expended within the last six years the sum of £2,000,000 on education. If the Catholic body had had their proportionate share of that £2,000,000 it would represent £350,000, and the annual share as far as regards Auckland would have been £75,000 for the last six years. The Catholic expenditure on education has been £28,000, and the cost of maintenance £4,000. It would be unfair to look on the whole of this amount as the actual saving to the State—a certain number have been brought up in the State schools—but we will deduct a proportionate amount on account of Catholic children who have gone to the State schools, and there remains a balance of £80,000 in our favour, which has been saved to the State by the Catholic population in the Province of Auckland. We are now only asking for common justice, and there is no getting over the facts and figures I have given to the Committee.

THURSDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1883.

Rev. RICHARD COFFEY, examined.

798. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are a clergyman of the Church of England, in charge of a parish in this city?—Yes.

799. Are there any schools solely maintained by your religious body in this city?—Not that I am aware of.

800. Are you in the habit of visiting the State schools?—No.

801. Can you state the number of Roman Catholic children attending the State schools in Wellington?—Not as a matter of fact; but I believe they are exceedingly few.

802. Do you approve of the present State system of secular education?—Emphatically No.

803. Do you believe in the reading of the Bible in the State schools?—That is a question I cannot answer off-hand. If the Bible had been introduced as part of the system when it was first inaugurated I might have acquiesced in it as the least of two evils; but, now we have launched into a system of secular education, from which the Bible has been excluded, I do not think it expedient, on the ground of policy and of principle, to accept as a concession to our just demands the mere reading of the Bible, which might, unless other conditions were attached to it, prove a hindrance to the object we have in view rather than a help to it.

804. Will you state fully your reasons for objecting to the State system?—Yes. I presume that the State, in undertaking this important work—(1.) Desired to make men good citizens. Now, nine-tenths of the failures in this respect are due to want of self-government, yet no provision is made for the promotion of self-government; hence the New Zealand educational scheme is radically defective. (2.) I hold that religion is the chief factor in teaching men self-government, and the New Zealand educational scheme practically excludes religion. (3.) This exclusion is based upon an assumption that the Sunday-schools can teach religion—an assumption which is contrary to fact. It is manifest that an hour a week is not sufficient. It is also manifest that the Sunday-schools can only reach such children as are sent, and it is notorious that the children who are most in need of religious instruction are those not likely to be sent to any Sunday-school. (4.) I object to the present educational scheme because the New Zealand Church, represented by her Synods, especially by her General Synod, is dissatisfied with the present Act, and desires that it should be amended in the direction indicated by the petition just read, and bearing the signature of the Bishop of Christchurch as Primate. I beg to remind the Committee that this petition is the outcome of the laity as well as of the bishops and clergy, for voting is by orders, and there must be a majority of each order before any resolution is carried. (5.) I object as a patriot, for criminal statistics and revolutionary movements prove that knowledge may be used for wicked purposes. Moreover, there are many who account for the widespread “larrikinism” which prevails in Australia and New Zealand by pointing to the secular character of education imparted in these colonies. I agree with this solution; and a visit to any gaol would be instructive to many. (6.) I object on grounds of abstract justice to the New Zealand Educational Act. It is manifestly unfair to make Roman Catholics, Jews, and others who cannot avail themselves of the Act pay towards the maintenance of the scheme. In fact, the Act is in this respect a veiled penal tax, and that, too, in a country where liberty of conscience is supposed to exist. The Act must irritate and alienate a large class of men. History shows the danger and worthlessness of penal Acts. (7.) I object in the name of statesmanship. For it is a maxim of political economy that the State should not interfere unnecessarily. There is here an interference beyond what is necessary. The English system shows clearly that a national system may advantageously embrace voluntary schools. The business of the State is to supplement not to supplant voluntary effort. (8.) I object as a free-trader. For the New Zealand educational system is a monopoly, with the usual consequences—an enhanced price for the article produced, and a deterioration in the quality of work, due to the absence of any healthy competition. The English Education Act illustrates one of my contentions. The cost of educating a child in England in the voluntary school is £1 14s. 9d; in the Board school, £2 1s. 6½d. But, when allowance is made for fees, &c., the cost to the State for the voluntary school is 14s. 10½d.; while in the Board school the cost is £1 11s. 5½d.; that is, more than double. There is no account taken in this comparison of the cost of administration or the money sunk in buildings, which would make the comparison still more in favour of the voluntary school. To illustrate the tendency towards costliness, I may add that Mr. Forster, when introducing the measure into Parliament, stated that 3d. in the pound would suffice, whereas the average rate for England is 5d.; in London it is 7d.; and in some districts it reaches 2s. 6d. in the pound. As the English Church educates fully half the children, and, as the