

Nonconformists educate a large portion of the remainder, it is clear that but for the voluntary schools the School Board rate would be oppressive beyond endurance. Lastly, I object to the New Zealand Education Act because—(a.) It is denominationalism in the worst form, namely, in the form of the secular school of thought. It is a concession to that very class that is likely to prove dangerous to the State. The fact that there are many Christian men in favour of it cannot alter my contention. (b.) It does not reach the very poorest—the class for which a national system should specially provide. (c.) It is, then, seeing that these poor who do not avail themselves of it pay taxes, a tax on the poor for the relatively rich.

805. Do you consider that purely secular education tends to increase crime and infidelity?—I do.

806. Do you consider that religious instruction should be left to parents—I mean taking the people at large?—As the people at large are incapable of giving it, I should think that absurd—like asking a man who has no arms to do manual work.

807. Do you think the Sunday-school is sufficient for religious instruction?—No; it is something which, if supplemented by something more, is useful.

808. Do you approve of denominational education?—Yes; on the grounds of justice and efficiency.

809. Do you consider the Catholics have a grievance under the present system?—Yes, a crying grievance.

810. What would you suggest to remove that grievance without doing injustice to other denominations?—I would have the system which prevails in England, where there is a denominational and a secular system, and where we hear of no grievance.

811. Do you approve of the first clause in the Synod's petition in relation to that?—Yes; but I would go further, and say that any individual man who was capable of educating should be recognized as well as denominationalists.

812. Do you approve the second clause in the Synod's petition?—I should be satisfied with that. There is a great deal of talk about ministers going to give religious instruction to children at the fag end of the day, or early in the day, but that must end in failure, and would give the children a distaste for religion.

813. Did you approve the third clause?—I should not oppose that. I should, of course, consider it absolutely necessary to consider the rights of conscience in any school the State recognized. I object rather to the wording of the clause. I would not leave it to the School Committee to select the portions of Scripture to be read. There might be an infidel or secular Committee elected, who might select undesirable passages, and the consequences would be disastrous.

814. *Hon. Mr. Dick.*] Did you attend the meeting of the Synod a few months back?—No.

815. *Mr. Fergus.*] You say the voluntary system is the cheaper in England, therefore you approve it. Have you considered that system with reference to New Zealand?—Yes; it must be manifest if the State had not to build the schools there would be less expense to the State. The denominationalists would not ask the State to build their schools. If the denominational system were recognized there are half a dozen buildings in the city which could be at once used as schools. And it is known that whenever the Government undertake a thing it is not done in the cheapest way; the object is to fleece them as much as possible.

816. The Bishop of Wellington has said the denominations would not be prepared to build the schools—that it would be unjust to ask them to do so?—I was not aware of that. I do not agree with it. We have the schools.

817. What number of pupils would constitute a strong school?—That is a very important point. It would be for the State, who undertook to pay money and recognize schools, to lay down conditions as to number. Perhaps forty or fifty—as many, at any rate, as would give full work to one teacher.

818. Do you know what it costs the State to teach a school of thirty children?—I should say about £6 per head.

819. On schools of not over forty we lose now an average of about £60 a year. Well, if all the large schools were split up into small ones by a denominational system, where would you raise the balance of the cost above the capitation?—I think the schools then could be worked for half the cost, as in England.

820. Well, supposing there was a school of twenty or thirty, with the present capitation of £4, would that be sufficient?—I see advertisements for teachers at salaries of £100. I think a denominational school would be more efficient for that £100, because there would be a great deal of voluntary work done.

821. But there are many other expenses besides teaching—cleaning, firing, repairs, and so on?—That would be.

822. You are assuming that all the parents would be members of the Church of England. In a small district where the total number of children would only make a small school—the parents would be of all denominations—you could not have the voluntary system there?—I presume the English Board system would be adopted.

823. Would you charge school fees in denominational schools?—I would charge fees in all schools. I think that is one cause of objection to the present system.

824. How much would school fees for all the country amount to per year?—I suppose about £200,000. The principle is more important than the amount.

825. *Mr. Fish.*] We are to assume that it is the opinion of the bishops and clergy of the Anglican Church that the denominational would be preferable to the present system?—Yes.

826. Can you tell us whether the bishops and clergy represent the feelings of the laity, or simply your own in this matter?—That is a difficult question. If you want a sound, wise opinion about medicine, the bulk of the people are unable to give it; you go to those who are capable of giving it. I say the bulk of the people are capable of giving only an ignorant opinion about this