

This, I suppose, is the proper time to say that I am, on the whole, much disappointed with the number of students enrolled in the various classes of the Thames School of Mines, as shown by Mr. Montgomery's last report to the Minister of Mines. I do not wish to criticize the policy of the committee of the Thames School of Mines Association, because I know it is composed of excellent and shrewd men; but in carrying on their functions they have departed widely from the scheme advocated by me. They have utterly abandoned the schools that I had inaugurated with great success in the important centres of Coromandel, Karangahake, Te Aroha, and Waiorongomai; and the result is that, instead of having classes for testing and assaying the ores attended by from three hundred to four hundred miners on the Hauraki Gulf, they have only a roll of some twenty miners and a hundred and twenty schoolboys.

The schoolboys are the redeeming feature of the Thames School of Mines, as well as a great feature of the West Coast and Otago schools; and I desire to call your attention as emphatically as I can to the fact of so many schoolboys in each Island learning mineral chemistry and the chemistry of gold- and silver-saving agents at these schools. With the lecture-rooms and laboratories now provided and fitted up and supplied with teaching appliances at the West Coast centres, and with a judicious instructor appointed to the Greymouth-Ross District, there is no doubt that there would be immediately a large accession to the membership of these schools.

In taking it on myself to recommend to you the reconstitution of the schools of mines on the basis of Government subsidy of £2 for £1 subscribed locally, such Government subsidy not in any event to exceed £1,870 for the whole colony, I think I am indicating a practical way out of the difficulty which at present confronts us. This basis is shown in Table B of this report. In connection with this new basis I wish to point out that, whilst the Government subsidy would not in any year exceed £1,870 for the whole colony, it might very well happen that it would fall considerably below that amount. If, for example, the local contributions of the supporters and members of the schools were to fall to, say, £600, the Government subsidy would be reduced to £1,200. The Government subsidy would indeed be measured by the success of the schools, and there would thus be a good guarantee that the money was being well spent. Of course, any sum contributed by the members of a school in excess of their quota under this Table B would go to supply chemicals and other appliances for the classes.

In conclusion, you will allow me to say that it will be a most calamitous thing for the goldfields to allow these schools to go down now that they have established themselves in homes of their own. Their property, in the form of teaching appliances, mineral collections, and buildings with their fittings, cost £1,535, without including the Thames and Reefton schools, which are proposed to be retained. These chemicals and collections, and in most cases the lecture-rooms, will represent so much money thrown away—money partly contributed by Government and partly by the miners on the strength of their faith in the assurances given them of Government support. I have not by any means given up the hope that the Government will be advised to continue these schools on some such basis as I have sketched in my proposals embodied in Table B. If it be otherwise determined, I can only protest that the scheme of technical schools has been abandoned, not by myself nor by the miners, but, after a most decided and indeed unparalleled success, by the Government of the colony.

The Chairman, Goldfields Committee, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
JAMES G. BLACK.

TABLE B (referred to in above Report).

TABULAR VIEW of MIDDLE ISLAND SCHOOLS of MINES (embodying proposed new Basis for the Reconstitution of the Goldfields Schools of Mines for the West Coast and Otago).

Name of School.	Annual Contribution.	Single Classes conducted by a Member of Teaching-staff, showing the Number of Weeks each Place will be entitled to.	Group Classes conducted by a Member of the Teaching-staff, showing Length of Teaching-session.	District Classes conducted by a Member of the Teaching-staff.	Visits of Professor Black and W. Goodlet.			
	£	Weeks.	Weeks.	Weeks.	Weeks.			
Nelson	25	} 5	5	5	4			
Collingwood	10							
Owen	15		5	5				
Lyell	10	3	3	3	}			
Denniston	15	5	} 10	} 13				
Westport	15	5						
Charleston	10	3	3	} 29				
Reefton	50	18	} 26					
Boatman's	25	8						
Ahaura	10	3	3	} 25	}			
Nelson Creek	10	3	} 14					
Notown	10	3						
Greymouth	25	8	} 14					
Kumara	25	8						
Dunganville	10	3						
Stafford	10	3						