

63. *Mr. M. J. S. Mackenzie.*] Assuming the existence of two children of the same age, physique, and mental calibre, one going to school at five years of age, and remaining at school until fourteen, the other going to school at seven, and remaining there until sixteen, does such difference in their treatment, in your opinion, give one a scholastic advantage?—If the comparison is between two children of the artisan and labouring class, I think that one would have the advantage which went to school at five and left at fourteen.

64. I am assuming that they went to the same school with the same advantages?—I think if the child belongs to what may be called refined people, getting the practical education which his position is calculated to give at the earliest age, such child could afford to wait until seven years. I think there is certainly a class distinction in this respect.

65. Then the result, in your opinion, is this: that, assuming these two children to be of the same class, you think that the child which goes earliest to school and leaves earliest will, in a scholastic sense, have an advantage as compared with the child which goes to school later and leaves later?—I should say that it depends on the kind of home the children came from: from one class of home I would let them go to school at five, from another class of home they need not go to school until seven. If two children belong to a class where what I have called the practical education of home-life is efficient, it would, I think, be better for them to go to school at seven; but if the two children have no such advantages in their earliest years it would be better for them to go at five and leave at fourteen.

66. *The Chairman.*] There is another question which I would ask you, but perhaps it may be left to the next examination, viz., as to payment by parents for the higher standards, or upon conditions, or by permission of Committees—in effect, whether the present system is as economical and efficient a one as can be made?

*Mr. Ormond:* What I propose to ask in the course of future examination is, if the different Boards have separate scales of salaries for the different classes of the staff employed by each, and if the witness would make a comparison of them; also if the witness could make an allocation of salaries for schools of different grades. It would also be a great advantage if the Committee had before it the different regulations made by the different Boards.

FRIDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 1887.

Dr. BROWN, Chairman of the Otago Board of Education in attendance, and examined.

67. *The Chairman.*] A circular was forwarded to you containing a number of questions upon which the Committee desire to get information: have you seen that circular?—This is the first time I have seen the circular, and I am therefore somewhat handicapped in giving the answers to the several questions. The first question is as to raising the school-age, upon which capitation allowance is paid. If I am to give an opinion, speaking as a medical man, I think that children, in the majority of cases, are sent too school too early. I do not think that for the purposes of real education the majority of children derive much benefit from schooling under six or seven years of age. During the early years of childhood I think that the best use that can be made of a child's time is to help him to get as sound and healthy a bodily organism as possible. At the same time I must say that, having gone carefully into this question of capitation allowance, and its bearing on the cost of education, I fail to see how, as long as the State continues to have the control of education in its hands, this system can be maintained unless the school-age is retained pretty much as it is, or the capitation allowance is increased: that is, if the school-age is raised from five years to seven, I think the capitation allowance for children in average attendance at the public schools ought to be increased.

68. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] I suppose, Dr. Brown, you are referring to the statutory capitation of £3 15s.?—I refer to the allowance, £3 19s., as it is at present.

69. Do I understand you to mean that £3 19s. would be ample if the age were raised to six years, but if raised to seven the capitation would, in your opinion, require to be increased?—Yes.

70. *Dr. Fitchett.*] You say that you think the children are sent too early too school: does not that depend upon the sort of instruction they get, and the sort of accommodation that exists?—Yes; but assuming the instruction to be intelligent, and the accommodation fit, I consider that at the present school-age children would get no harm from attendance at school, and the form of instruction they get there—supposing the hours are not too long. I lay great stress on that point. I put special emphasis on this point, so far as it relates to the school hours. I think they are at present too long for infants. I fail to see what benefit is derived from an attendance of four hours—two hours in the forenoon, and two hours in the afternoon—for very young children.

71. Is the present accommodation fit?—It has been made as fit as possible; that is, as fit as we could make it in Otago.

72. Do you not think that a child would be better off, even if kept in premises not actually adapted to his use, than if he were running in the streets?—I do not.

73. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] You think that under any circumstances the child would be better in the open air, enjoying any healthful form of recreation?—I do.

74. *Mr. M. J. S. Mackenzie.*] Are you speaking as a medical man, or from experience generally? Is it theory, or the result of experience?—A theory to be worth anything is founded upon experience.

75. Do I understand you to mean that, so far as this opinion of yours goes, it was a theory, but it has been now adopted as the result of past experience?—My opinion is based on experience and observation.

76. *The Chairman.*] As to the second question?—With regard to fees for the higher standards I am in this position: that my individual opinion is probably not worth anything, so that it may clash