

are in vogue in other places where religion is a part and parcel of them, our system compares favourably or unfavourably with them?—I do not know as to that. I am most familiar with the state of things that obtains in Scotland, where they have a great opinion of the influence of religious training. I believe it is the religious training that most Scotchmen get which has brought them to the front in every part of the world. I believe that it was religious training which developed their nature, and gave them that robustness of moral and intellectual character which they are found to possess wherever you put them.

273. Do you think that when the training was more religious than it is now men were more moral than they are now?—I know that religion is taught now in Scotland as it was in my boyhood. I do not remember a time when it was otherwise.

274. Do you believe that the children of other places are more moral than those of New Zealand?—How can I tell? But if you ask me whether religious training tends to improvement I say that it does. Where you get religion planted in the heart of a young or an old person it has a good influence on the character and life.

275. I would like to know whether your information shows results to the advantage of our children as compared with those under systems where religious instruction is given. Would you be prepared to put in statistical information on that point?—You have asked me whether I would be surprised to hear that where no religion is taught the moral sense is better than where it is taught. I would be surprised to hear that.

276. I can only say it is so. There is only one more question that I will ask you as to this claim to religious instruction in our State schools. Do you know whether it originated with the people or the clergy?—I believe it is a deeply-felt want with the people; that the clergy, so far as they express themselves, are simply voicing what is the deep-felt want of our people, and therefore a want to be satisfied.

277. Do you think that if this text-book is admitted to the schools it will be regarded as a final solution of the difficulty—you say the various religious bodies are united?—The bulk of them, Yes.

278. Will they regard it as final, or only temporary?—I believe most of the Christian churches are thoroughly sincere in this matter; they have come to the conclusion that they are not at all likely to get what they would all desire. They believe that denominational education is hopeless in this colony. They have come to the conclusion to join with us in asking for the introduction of some religious instruction into the schools upon which all would be agreed. I believe there is no ulterior object contemplated. The Bishop of Wellington referred to this matter in his address to the Anglican Synod a short time ago.

279. Do you accept the statement of other dignitaries?—I do not know anything of the statements of other dignitaries. I know there are some who would like a good deal more; but if they would have more they are now cutting the ground from under their feet in joining in this movement.

280. *Mr. McNab.*] You say you are a member of the Wellington Education Board?—Yes.

281. The Board has the largest say in the appointment of the teacher?—Yes; they carry out the true meaning of the Act in regard to the appointment of teachers subject to the approval of the committees.

282. Would the fact of the applicant being a Roman Catholic affect their selection of a teacher where the school is situated in a strong Presbyterian district?—We have no district here in the North Island that we could call a strong Presbyterian district. There are such in the South Island. The appointment never turns upon the question of the Church to which the teacher belongs.

283. If this book had to be read in schools under the direction of a teacher, would you consider the question whether he was a Roman Catholic or not in the event of his being sent to a strongly Presbyterian community?—I do not know; if he were a thoroughly good man, willing to read it, I should offer no objection; at the same time, as a practical thing, it is better if you had a community that was wholly Protestant to appoint a teacher in sympathy with them, and *vice versa*. It is very likely the Roman Catholic teacher might not himself feel at home there.

284. Would you take that view in considering your selection?—I do not know whether we would or not; I do not know that it has ever come before our mind.

285. Would there not be some danger of injustice in that method of selection?—If he were a man in other respects qualified for the position, we would probably appoint him; I think he would probably be appointed, and the Board might make other arrangements for teaching the Scripture text-book if he objected.

286. The Board communicating with him to make the necessary arrangements?—He would not make the arrangements; if he satisfied the Board that he was a conscientious man, and objected, the Board would make arrangements.

287. Would the Board be likely to ask him his religious views?—I do not think so. I do not think the Board would apply any such test.

288. You quoted the fact that a number of Roman Catholics signed the petition?—I cannot say so of my own knowledge. I made that statement on the testimony of others; I could not prove it, but I believe it is so.

289. Do you know there is a large number of people who hold that, if this Bill should pass, it will be the stepping-stone to denominational education?—It is very likely they do, but I think they are wrong.

290. Then, it would be the interest of all who held that view to sign the petition?—I am not quite sure that would be so; for, if we get what we want they could not say on the one side that the system was "godless," nor, on the other, they could not demand the aid of the State for denominational schools on the ground that there was no religion taught in the State schools. By doing so they would be only cutting the ground from under their feet.