

55. If denominationalism were strong in particular districts, do you think that would render it likely, or not likely, that certain teachers would not be employed?—I think it is likely it would work in that way.

56. *Mr. Collins.*] Do you think that the introduction of this text-book into the school curriculum will bring education more into accord with sound political principle?—No.

57. As a matter of sound political principle, do you not think the State has any right to take charge of religious instruction?—That is my opinion; it is also the opinion of my denomination.

58. Do you think this will be regarded by many people as a final solution of the educational difficulty?—I have not met with anybody who thinks it will be a final solution of the educational difficulty.

59. If the representatives of other bodies said it would be, or if they accepted it as final, making an absolute bar to any future improvement, would you be content?—I do not believe in finality at all.

60. Would it be a stepping-stone to denominationalism?—I would not say that those who are in favour of it are conscientiously advocating what they believe to be right; but, without attributing any wrong motive to them, if they say it will not lead to denominationalism, I cannot agree with them.

61. They may be mistaken?—I think they are mistaken.

62. *Mr. E. M. Smith.*] You appear here on behalf of your Church?—Yes.

63. Can you tell me the number of your Church members or adherents?—No, I cannot.

64. Is it given in any report?—I do not think it is; as a general rule we do not deal much in statistics.

65. You cannot give us information as to the strength of your body?—I do not like to make a statement that might be quoted, and which, without reference to documents, might prove to be inaccurate; but I could give you approximately the number.

*The Chairman:* That can be ascertained from the census returns.

67. *Mr. G. J. Smith.*] You say that the great body of your Church is against this movement with the exception of one or two: do you mean ministers or laymen—Church members?—We have two or three men in the ministry who are in favour of it; I do not know how many laymen, there may be a few, but no instructed Congregationalist, I am certain, is in favour of it.

68. Have you read the opinions of the great number of ministers who voice it?—That would not make the slightest difference.

69. You say you object to the introduction of this book into the schools; do you object to the proposal that the voice of the colony should be taken on the question?—I say honestly that question has not cropped up in our discussions on this subject; that rather refers to the large constitutional question as to whether one believes in the voice of the people. I would not object to take the voice of the people upon it.

70. You may not perhaps know that it provides for taking the voice of the people being obtained upon the question whether the laity are in favour of this text-book being introduced into the schools?—I would like to know whether that means individual committees can determine it, or whether it will be by districts—

71. The colonial vote?—I think that, occupying the position we do, to decide such a question by counting heads is an exceedingly dangerous principle; if every man in New Zealand were to take up a particular religious opinion, and I were opposed to it, I should still say, though hundreds of thousands were against me, they have no right to interfere with me, nor to force me to accept or support their views.

72. But, where an express provision is made for the teaching in schools, as represented by parents and guardians, there cannot be coercion there?—How would it work?

73. If parents of children object they are not to be there?—You have no right to use the funds of the colony to give religious instruction. If the teacher in any district where there was a strong sectarian feeling were to make use of the conscience clause, we believe that it would interfere with that man's position, so as to make him exceedingly uncomfortable.

74. You know there are people in the colony who object to some things now in the curriculum of the public schools?—Yes.

75. And that there are contributions made towards it by the State?—But these are not religious subjects.

76. As to the interpretation of these text-books, are you aware that the Bill now before the House provides that there shall be no comment; that the book shall be read without interpretation?—No interpretation, nor anything historical! that is worse. I would be more opposed to that. You never heard of Greek or Roman history without comment. That rather confirms me in my objection to the introduction of this book.

77. You object to it with comment, and you object to it without comment?—I object to religious instruction in the State schools, or anything that leads to it.

78. You say this will lead to religious tests?—I think so.

79. Do you apply that to the Committee, or to the Education Board, that they would insist on a religious test?—I am not sufficiently acquainted with the details of working the Act. The people who have the appointment of the teachers, I understand, are the Committees.

80. You said the Roman Catholics are waiting for other people to fight this matter out?—That is my opinion; they are not in favour of this, and they are simply waiting to see the result.

81. Then, you say, this is a step towards the establishment of a State church?—It is in that direction.

82. Upon what do you found that opinion?—Well, it is so obvious. It is the State taking the control of the teaching of religion.

83. What bodies would you look on as State churches. There is the Church of England, the