

Street, and Toitoti Valley Schools; on Thursday at Hampden Street School, and on Friday at Haven Road and Tasman Street Schools, the ordinary school-work does not begin till 10 o'clock.

In the half-hour thus deducted from the ordinary school-hours, on the days and at the schools mentioned, religious instruction is voluntarily given by four clergymen of different denominations or their friends. The parents of the children who attend the Bible-classes have, in answer to a circular, given their written consent to the attendance of their children. The Education Board's teachers do not give the religious instruction, though some of them voluntarily attend while the lessons are given, in the hope that their presence may check disorder, and so prevent any subsequent loss of discipline.

At Haven Road School all the children on the roll attend the Bible-classes, and at Hampden Street all but two, and these do not present themselves till 10 o'clock, when the school-teacher begins the ordinary lessons of secular instruction. At each of the other schools there are some children who do not attend for Bible instruction, and those who present themselves are allowed to sit in a separate room under supervision and prepare lessons, or are instructed in the subjects as prescribed in the syllabus by some of the State School teachers, who attend voluntarily for the purpose. A few children do not present themselves till 10 o'clock.

So far as I can gather, the only inducements offered to children to attend for secular instruction at the particular times mentioned are the knowledge that they will receive tuition if they desire it, and in the case of many the fact that they are not aware that the alteration of school-hours affects them in any way, and think that attendance is just as compulsory during the half-hour of Bible instruction as at other times. On the other hand, the matter has been ventilated in the local Press; and the members of the Committee contend that the parents are perfectly aware of the arrangements made, and that it is entirely optional with them whether they send their children during the half-hour of religious instruction or not.

The Chairman, Nelson Education Board.

I remain, &c.,

G. A. HARKNESS, Inspector.

No. 11.

MEMORANDUM from the NELSON EDUCATION BOARD.

The Secretary, Education Department, Wellington.

I HAVE the honour to inform you, in reply to your letter of the 7th ultimo, that, at the instance of the Board, the senior Inspector has reported fully on the subject of religious instruction in the Nelson Schools, and a copy of the report will be placed in the hands of the Minister of Education by the Board's Chairman on Friday next, when a deputation from the Board will have the honour of waiting upon him.

After carefully considering the report, the following resolution was adopted, viz: "In reply to the Minister's letter, the Minister be informed that the Board, through its executive officers, has made careful inquiry into the question of religious instruction in the schools within the City of Nelson, and find that the Committee has not exceeded the powers conferred by section 84, subsection (3) of 'The Education Act, 1877.' The Board finds that the school-hours are in excess of those required by the Act, and that religious instruction is not given in school-hours, and that when religious instruction is given the attendance of neither children or teachers is compulsory."

27th April, 1898.

STEAD ELLIS, Secretary.

No. 12.

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 3rd May, 1898.

I have the honor to inform you that, after conference with your deputation, the Minister of Education is not satisfied with the arrangements made by the Nelson School Committee in connection with the imparting of religious instruction to the pupils.

It is necessary to make it absolutely clear that the religious instruction is not given during school-hours. The provision of secular instruction during the time of religious instruction tends to render this distinction obscure, and therefore must not be continued. Whatever ceremony marks the opening of the school-day on four days of the week must be observed also on the day of religious instruction, and must on that day be interposed between the religious instruction and the regular secular instruction which is the proper work of the school.

I have, &c.,

WM. JAS. HABENS,

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

Secretary for Education.

No. 13.

MEMORANDUM from the NELSON EDUCATION BOARD.

The Secretary, Education Department, Wellington.

I BEG to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd ultimo, which was laid before the Board on the 31st.

By direction of the Board, the Nelson School Committee have been furnished with a copy of the letter, and requested to make such arrangements as will meet the views of the Minister of Education given expression to in the letter, and will preclude the imparting of secular instruction during the time when religious instruction is being given.

4th June, 1898.

STEAD ELLIS, Secretary.