

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Uchter John Mark, Earl of Ranfurly, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by the Commission of the 9th day of April, 1901, under the hand of your Excellency and the Seal of the Colony, for the purpose of considering the best method of establishing a uniform scale of staff and salaries to be in force throughout the Colony, under which the number of teachers employed in public schools maintained under "The Education Act, 1877," having an equal number of children in average daily attendance shall, as far as possible, be the same; and the teachers holding similar positions to one another shall, other things being equal, be paid equal salaries; and to report as to the principles upon which such uniform scale should be based, taking into consideration the total amount payable by the Government of the Colony for such purposes as are contemplated by the payments now made under subsection (2) of section 8 of the said Act, the said amount not exceeding on the whole a sum equal to a capitation of £4 per annum for each child in average daily attendance, have now the honour to report to your Excellency as follows:—

1. EVIDENCE.

For the purpose of obtaining evidence upon the matters committed to us, we caused advertisements to be inserted in the newspapers circulating in the localities we proposed to visit, inviting those desirous of giving information to appear before us. Sittings were held at Wellington, Blenheim, Nelson, Greymouth, Hokitika, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Timaru, Auckland, New Plymouth, Wanganui, and Napier, and every publicity was given, the meetings being held with open doors.

During our inquiries thirty-eight sittings of the Commission were held, in addition to numerous meetings of Committees. We examined 150 witnesses, including the Inspector-General of Schools, Chairmen, Secretaries, and Members of Education Boards, Members of School Committees, Inspectors of Schools, Teachers, and others. The evidence, oral and otherwise, elicited during the inquiry is attached hereto.

The first witness examined was Mr. G. Hogben, M.A., Secretary for Education and Inspector-General of Schools, who placed before us a scale of staffs and salaries drafted by himself. This scale was, at the request of the Commission, immediately distributed by the Education Department among the teachers and members of Boards and School Committees throughout the Colony. During the inquiry several draft scales were submitted, and finally five were under consideration. Of these, Exhibit 2 is the scale put in by Mr. Hogben; Exhibits 50 and 107 show the same scale in an amended form; Exhibit 110 is a scale also drafted by Mr. Hogben, differing from the others by omitting deductions from salaries in connection with certificates, and requiring a capitation grant of £4 5s. The fifth scale was presented by a member of the Commission.

2. THE NECESSITY FOR A COLONIAL SCALE.

The necessity for the adoption of a colonial scale arises from conditions connected with the administration of primary education in the colony. The Department of Education distributes to the Boards the capitation voted by Parliament, and each Board frames its own regulations relating to the staffs and salaries of the schools. Given thirteen districts and thirteen schemes, we are invited to bring into harmony widely divergent interests and conditions—a task, it must be admitted, presenting some difficulty.

The Boards have frequently found it necessary, for financial and other reasons, to change their regulations; and it is hard to say how many different scales have been in operation since the Boards were constituted. The evidence taken shows that, as a general result of these changes, the salaries of teachers throughout the Colony are steadily falling,