

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WELLINGTON.

MONDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1901.

Mr. G. HOGBEN, M.A., Secretary for Education and Inspector-General of Schools, examined.

Mr. Hogben: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I have to put before you one or two matters. I wish to state that I appear before the Commission on behalf of the Education Department, and that I desire to afford the Commission every assistance—which, of course, the Commission has a right to demand—that lies in my power; and this not only in regard to giving all the information which the Commission asks for, and which may be useful to it, but to assist the Commission by asking questions of the witnesses who may appear before it, so that not only the present work of the Commission, but the carrying-out of any new policy based on the report of the Commission may be all the easier. The principal evidence I shall bring before the Commission will be on the lines of a memorandum prepared for the Minister of Education some months ago, which takes the form of a suggested colonial scale of staff and salaries. There are a great many matters discussed in it which will take some time to explain; but briefly this scale of staff and salaries is a proposed manner of distributing the main portion of the vote for primary education—namely, the capitation on average attendance. I will hand in a copy of this colonial scale of staff and salaries to the Commission [Exhibit 2]. Four pounds has been assumed as the capitation grant. Under the present statutory grant of £3 15s.—that is, without the 5s. increase—this suggested scale would be utterly impossible. The total amount of the capitation grant for the year ending 31st December, 1899, at £4 per head of the average attendance would be £441,263. Out of the capitation grant there are payable all teachers' allowances and salaries, and also the general expenses of the Education Boards and School Committees. At the present time the capitation grant is payable to each Board on the average attendance of all the schools in its district. One of the first points it is necessary to consider is that the introduction of this colonial scale of staff and salaries necessarily involves the question of the finance of the Boards, inasmuch as the capitation basis of payment to Boards is unworkable in conjunction with this scale, and would render it impossible. For instance, in the smallest district—Westland—the total of salaries and allowances under the scale exceeds the total amount of the capitation grant, even at the increased rate of £4 per head; and in other small districts, and in large districts where the population is sparse and small schools are numerous, the balance available, after paying teachers' salaries and allowances according to the scale, for the general expenses of the Boards even if these are reduced to the utmost limit, is too small. My position is this: that you cannot deal with this £4 in such a way as to secure uniform salaries except by taking the amount available for the whole colony, and that you cannot get a uniform scale of salaries without a uniform scale of staff. I would call your attention to paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of the attached memorandum. In regard to the third proviso, "To remove inequalities and anomalies of salaries paid," I may say that the same positions in different districts are paid salaries that differ very widely indeed, but that is a point I can illustrate later on. Coming to the fourth proviso—"Consistently with the above," &c.—I want my position here to be perfectly clear that in projecting this scheme there has been no intention whatever of any policy that shall intrench upon the discretion of the Boards.

1. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] What do you call the discretion of the Boards?—Well, I will say the functions of the Boards. The intention of interfering with those functions has been attributed to me, but does not exist in my mind. I cannot avoid giving an expression of opinion upon it, holding, as I do, that you must have in certain matters strong and efficient local control; and I take this opportunity of saying so, because if there is anything in this scheme that interferes with the proper functions of the Boards it was not intended to be there. There is not in this scheme any proposal to interfere with the prerogative of Boards in the appointment and dismissal of teachers, or with their control of teachers under the Education Act. The only thing proposed is to establish a colonial scale. I say this without any reserve.

2. The Boards, and not the Government, shall have the payment of teachers?—Certainly, the Government laying down what staff there should be, and what the teachers are to be paid. Of course, I point out that this circular has not been adopted by the Government; it is simply proposed, and the responsibility of proposing it must rest with me.

3. *Mr. Stewart.*] I understand Mr. Hogben wishes us to accept this simply as a basis of discussion?—Yes, as the basis on which I found my evidence.

Mr. Davidson: I think it would be unwise to go very far into this question to-day. It would be better to study this proposed scale carefully to-night, and we should then be prepared to-morrow to question Mr. Hogben upon the details.

4. *Mr. Stewart.*] I would like to ask, does Mr. Hogben regard it as necessary that the money should be paid directly from the Department or the Boards? I suppose it does not affect the question whether the Boards pay the teachers in its own employ?—Theoretically, it does not make any difference at all whether the Department pays or the Boards pay. I think it better that the Boards should pay, although I do not say that the Department ought not to pay. It is a question whether the teachers should lose because their average attendance goes down one particular quarter—whether it should not be based on a longer period. Whatever a Board pays it can claim from the Department.