

273. Then, Mr. Smith was the source from which you got that information leading you to impose those conditions?—Yes; in the manner I stated before.

274. The sewing-mistress is not a certificated mistress or a pupil-teacher?—No.

275. *Mr. Hill.*] Supposing your sewing-mistress were to absent herself from school for a day, what would you do?—I should expect her to supply a very good reason.

276. For the sum of £12 a year do you expect her to attend every day throughout the year the same as you do?—Yes, because I explained the position clearly to her.

CHARLES C. HOWARD, Headmaster of the Picton School, President of the Marlborough Educational Institute.

277. I assume I am at liberty to take the proposed scale of staff and salaries, point out what I think its good features and its bad features, and give hints that may occur to me as to improvements which it will be possible to effect in it. First of all, I consider the basis of the scale most unfair. I do not believe in making a man's salary dependent on average attendance. It presses very heavily on teachers in this district, and is most unfair. I am able to plead the cause of others more freely, perhaps, than they themselves, inasmuch as it does not affect me at present, for my own salary is not dependent on average attendance. The authorities place a teacher, unintentionally of course, in a very difficult position, in which, under this system, he is liable to be mulcted on account of circumstances over which he has no control. The industries in his district may have worked out, the bush been cleared, the sawmills closed down, the mines abandoned; there may thus be a scarcity of industrial openings, necessitating a migration of population; the younger people have to go further afield in search of homes; the attendance suffers, there are no young pupils coming on, and the teacher is penalised for it. I know of a teacher whose average attendance has gone down through no fault of his own whatever, and yet he is liable to have his salary diminished. If the Government is going to pay on the average attendance, I think steps should certainly be taken to secure to such a man as that transfer to another field of duty, though, of course, it is for the Boards to do it. Then, again, I would ask you to consider how bad weather, bad roads, &c., may act on a teacher's salary; and not those things only, but unappreciative parents. A case occurred within a few miles of this town—a schoolmaster had occasion to report the non-attendance of a child at school; there was a large family of the children, and only one of them was irregular, but that child had to be reported. The consequence was that the mother took advantage of the School Attendance Act, and sent her other children to school only six times during the week, instead of ten, and tried to get other neighbours in the district to do the same thing, in order to reduce the headmaster's salary. The School Attendance Act, in my experience, actually induces to irregularity of attendance. I know parents who systematically take advantage of it. If under such circumstances a master does good work I say he deserves really good pay whether his attendance has gone down or not. Unwise legislation has actually increased the difficulties of the teachers, and then the department proposes to take advantage of it and lower their salaries. In my own school, Picton, the attendance fluctuates greatly. [Witness quoted figures showing fluctuation in attendance.] For the last two quarters the roll was 176; the highest attendance in the half-year being 171, and the lowest 47. At these seaside places there are all sorts of attractions—picnics, boating expeditions, and so forth; on the Wednesday half-holiday parents go picnicking, taking their children with them. I mention these things in order to show how the attendance fluctuates, and also to show that the average attendance is by no means a fair gauge of what a teacher must be considered capable of. The system of payment on average attendance is especially inapplicable to a young country like this, where things are in a state of transition and flux, and where many of the industries are always more or less unsettled. We are in a totally different position from, say, Birmingham and London, and the large cities in older countries. Then, I should like to take somewhat higher ground. I ask myself what was I immediately engaged to do? To teach in accordance with certain regulations. It is surely not my business to supply the material I have got to work up, any more than it would be that of a factory to do so; it is my business to teach to the best of my ability those who come to be taught. It is not my business to go scouring the country to bring children to school. The State establishes schools, provides teachers, says education is to be compulsory, but, having failed so far in perfecting machinery capable of making it so, proposes to punish the teacher. As a means to the better recognition of a teacher's capabilities, it would be fairer to pay him on the highest attendance. The average roll-number would probably be a truer basis still if the purging of rolls were as strictly done everywhere as in Marlborough, and the system of register inspection were as satisfactory. It would be far better still to adopt some such system as prevails in some of the Australian States—divide the schools into certain classes and prescribe a salary for each class of school. But if this cannot be, and if the average attendance must be the basis, then, as I have said before, where the attendance is diminished through no fault of the teacher certainly some pressure should be brought to bear on the authorities to get him transferred to another school where he will get a fair salary. That is one reason why I should like to see a colonial scale of staff and salaries. A man would have a greater chance of promotion than is the case now, when the Legislature has tied the hands of Boards by vague instructions about consulting Committees. I could tell you of teachers here who, the attendance having gone down through no fault of their own, causing them to be in danger of losing salary, have over and over again applied for transfer, sending in applications for schools in other parts of the district; but because these men have done eight or ten years' good service for the Board it was considered a good reason by the local Committees for passing them over and getting outsiders. Should not length of service also be taken into account in fixing salaries? Should you not reward a man for faithful service? A schoolmaster has no such inducement; he may serve for twenty or thirty years, as the case may be, and then, grown old, he is liable to be cast aside as worn out. Another matter I do not like in the proposed scale is this: I do not see why it should