

245. Why are girls so anxious to obtain positions as pupil-teachers at these small salaries?—I suppose the reason is that they prefer such positions to household service.

246. You do not think there is a greater demand for female labour than male labour in that respect?—No; I think it is simply a question of salary. If the salaries paid were fair ones there would be no difficulty in getting males.

247. Do you find any difficulty in putting those pupil-teachers into schools when they are qualified?—No, we do not seem to experience any difficulty in that respect.

248. Do you think it would be an advantage if you had fewer pupil-teachers?—Yes, I think it would.

249. Why?—Because I think it would be better to have more assistants.

250. Then, I assume the crop of pupil-teachers is too great for the soil?—Possibly so.

251. You say that the small schools are not paying?—Yes.

252. They have to be supported at the expense of the larger ones?—Yes.

253. With regard to the question of the capitation grant, do you think it fair to give the same amount of capitation to such districts on the West Coast as to districts in the larger centres?—No; I think there should be a graduated scale of capitation.

254. You think that the best basis?—You cannot have a hard-and-fast rule.

255. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Your fixed minimum salary in these small schools is £56, you say?—Yes.

256. And out of that the teacher has to pay board and lodging?—Yes.

259. I think you alluded to some of the wealthy Education Boards: will you enumerate some of them?—I understand that North Canterbury and Otago are the principal ones.

258. You think that the whole of the West Coast should be amalgamated?—Yes; because I think the expenses would be less.

259. Have you noticed that the sum for travelling-expenses of members of the Board is £222 15s.?—Yes. The expenses of the country members predominate, for they have to come considerable distances; the town members receive nothing whatever for expenses—for myself I have never received anything whatever.

JOSEPH PETRIE, Member of the Grey Education Board.

261. *The Chairman.*] Will you state to the Commission your opinion as to the desirability or otherwise of a colonial scale of staff and salaries?—I think that the main source of all our trouble is the question of finance, and the fact that at the present time the Government have not placed the teachers upon a proper footing. I think the teachers are underpaid all round, and that the profession has not received that support and consideration at the hands of the people of New Zealand that it should. With regard to the salaries paid in these small schools, they cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered a living-wage. Our higher-paid teachers I consider are considerably underpaid also. I am of opinion that as our large centres of population depend to a great extent upon the outlying districts for support, such outlying districts and their small schools should receive greater support and attention than is now given. The children of settlers in these back-country districts should receive the benefits of education, let the cost be what it may. Supposing the cost did amount to, say, £70,000, is not the money well spent? I say emphatically that in these small districts wherever it can be shown that there are five or six children the State is not doing its duty if it does not provide them with the means of education and a competent teacher. That is the principle we have adopted here, and it is the principle that has landed us in trouble times out of number—in fact, once or twice we were nearly on the verge of bankruptcy. We get no revenue from the primary reserves, but by reason of the high-school endowment we have been able to divert that money towards aiding our teachers in these small district schools. Our great difficulty has been in getting properly trained teachers. They are not well trained; they have not gone through a training-college; they have passed the Sixth Standard and have been at once made pupil-teachers, afterwards graduating from one class to another. I have the opinion of some Inspectors and some of the best teachers that such a training is not sufficient. We are not able to get male pupil-teachers, for the reason that the salaries paid are inadequate. Our best male teachers leave us when a suitable opportunity offers, for we are unable to pay them a sufficient salary. They leave us to go to another Board, or else take advantage, as did one of our best teachers at the Ahaura, of embarking upon some other avocation in life. With regard to a colonial scale of salaries, I have not gone carefully into the matter. In regard to the recent schedule on distribution by the department, we had two teachers in the Greymouth School occupying the same position, but one of the teachers held a higher certificate and longer service, yet she received an increase of £5, while the junior, so far as service and classification are concerned, got an increase of £10, their salaries previously being equal. Referring again to small schools, I am strongly of the opinion that no teacher in charge of one of those schools should receive a salary of less than £100 per annum.

262. *Mr. Hill.*] Do you refer to a male teacher?—Male or female. In our country districts it is absolutely essential that they should receive a salary of £100, for we assume that they should be in a position to save a small sum per annum. It will cost them at the very least from £60 to £70 a year to live and clothe themselves, and surely £30 a year is not a great deal for a teacher occupying a responsible position to save in a country like this. Provided that a colonial scale is sufficiently liberal and states a minimum salary of £100 it has my warmest support.

263. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] You say that many of the male teachers are leaving the service in order to better themselves?—Yes.

264. Are you aware that such is the case throughout the colony?—Yes; possibly because the salaries are, as I said, inadequate.

265. Are you aware that perhaps more teachers have left good positions in Otago than in any other districts in New Zealand?—No, I am not aware of it.