

176. Has the Board been frequently in conflict with Committees in regard to the selection of teachers?—During the last few years the Board has had very little trouble indeed.

177. When vacancies arise do you invariably invite applications?—Always, except in the case of aided schools. Occasionally a teacher is promoted in the larger schools, but it has to be done in due form.

178. I notice, compared with some other districts, your incidental expenses are somewhat large?—The incidental expenses are larger in this district.

179. For instance, compared with the schools of Wellington, in many cases they are nearly double here?—That is so; there is a great difference.

180. Can you account for that?—I do not know the conditions surrounding the Wellington schools. I think that in North Canterbury perhaps firing costs a good deal of money. In Otago fuel would be much cheaper, and probably the stone schools would not require so much attention; but the fact remains that fifteen months ago the Board attempted to make a 5-per-cent. reduction, and the outcry of the Committees was very persistent, and there is a deputation coming to the Board at the next meeting to see what can be done.

181. When vacancies occur have you any great difficulty in finding suitable teachers?—No difficulty at all, except occasionally in the outlying districts, where the conditions of living are not very conducive to comfort.

182. Do you find that many of your most qualified teachers are leaving the profession?—No; we have not lost many.

183. Do the assistants complain of their salaries as compared with those of the headmasters?—I think, generally speaking, complaints have been received from all sections of the teaching profession.

184. I suppose all the headmasters receive either a free house or rent allowance?—Yes.

185. Is that extended to the assistant as well, assuming he is a married man?—No.

186. Then, although the headmasters receive nearly double the salary, the assistants are not allowed house allowance?—No.

187. *Mr. Stewart.*] Does it obtain in your district that the wives of members of the School Committees are sewing-mistresses in the schools?—In a good many cases the sewing-mistress is the relative of the Chairman or of a member of the Committee.

188. Do you think it is more justifiable to do that, or to appoint the wife of the teacher?—I think it depends on the circumstances of each case. Generally speaking, the master's wife is as qualified to teach sewing as the relative of a member of the Committee.

189. On whose recommendation are these appointments made?—The sewing-mistress is appointed by the Committee, subject to the approval of the Board. This Board always agrees to the appointment if the candidate is suited for the position.

190. The suitability of the candidate is judged by the Committee?—Yes.

191. Do you not think it would be wise to make it a statutory disability that a relative of a member of the School Committee should be appointed?—I think it would debar suitable candidates in many cases. I think the Committeemen's families are the only ones you could draw a sewing-mistress from in some cases. Of course, there is the master's wife; but in some cases there is no master's wife at all.

192. I think, under this proposed scale, where there is a mistress, the next appointment must be a master?—Yes.

193. How do you think that would work?—I do not think it would work at all.

L. B. Wood, Inspector of Schools, examined.

*Mr. Wood:* I may say at the outset that I am in favour of a colonial scale. You have all doubtless had a multiplicity of examples put before you as to how such a scale would benefit the small districts, but I wish to show you how I think the large districts may reasonably be expected to benefit by it also. In Otago, where I worked for some years as a teacher, they had the most barbarous system at work that I could conceive of in a country liberally provided with funds for the maintenance of education. I refer to the staffing of schools single-handed. I do not wish to make any reflection upon Otago as an educational district, for, notwithstanding this barbarous system, it is perhaps the best educational district in New Zealand. You will scarcely credit me when I say that in a school with an average attendance of 50, and sometimes as many as 65 on the roll, a teacher had to slave away single-handed with eight classes and teaching about thirteen subjects. I say, in the light of comparison with this colonial scale, what is there to say about what they had to submit to in Otago for years? The evil is now modified slightly, but not nearly enough yet. Under a colonial scale such a system could never have existed. It could never have stood the criticism of the colony. Again, with regard to incidental allowances to Committees, I will give you an instance of how a "large" Board can blunder. In the year 1894 a scale was introduced in this district by which the teachers suffered a very large reduction. I offered a remonstrance at the time against the teachers suffering any reduction whatever—it should have come out of the incidental expenses. There were thirty more schools in Otago than there were in North Canterbury, and yet the incidental expenses to the Committees of Otago were about £1,750 less than they were here in Canterbury. What can you say about that? Immediately that is submitted to colonial criticism as apart from parish criticism the thing will not hold water. There must be something like a uniform scale of incidentals throughout the colony, and a general reduction throughout North Canterbury. One other illustration of the benefit to be derived by a large district from a colonial scale I may be permitted to give, as it has an important bearing on a question which must deeply concern this Commission—the question of equal pay to men and women. An important principle in our scale of 1894 showed that the Board were inclined to favour equal pay to men and women, and in carrying out this principle a large measure of injustice was