

82. Which do you think the better in such schools—observational studies from botany downwards or physical science?—I should say that observational studies are the more useful in such schools.

83. So that the difficulty would not be so great as if it were physical science that was being considered?—No.

84. *The Chairman.*] You stated that the efficiency of the Nelson schools would be greatly improved by amalgamation into one central school?—Yes.

85. Do you think there would be any counter disadvantage by a falling-off in the aggregate attendance?—There would be unless arrangements were made to convey the younger children from the outlying parts of the town; still I think it could be arranged so that the attendance would be increased rather than decreased.

86. You say it is only from hearsay when you tell us that the work of a country teacher who has several standards to take charge of is less arduous than the work of a first or second assistant in a town school with but one standard to manage?—Yes, that is so.

87. You say that it is the experience of more than one teacher, do you not?—Yes.

88. How many?—Three or four have stated this as their experience.

89. Were the salaries of those men materially increased when they became assistants in town schools from what they were previously when in charge of country schools?—In one case not very greatly; in the case of the others I think they were considerably improved; I am not certain.

90. Do you not think there must have been a considerable improvement in the salaries paid if they would abandon the country schools to become assistants in town schools?—I cannot answer the question offhand; in one case there was certainly no very great increase.

91. Then, if there was no great increase, as you say, now do you account for the fact that they were willing to leave the positions they had in order to take up more arduous work?—The amount of work may have been greater, but no doubt they were willing to undertake it for a slight increase of pay.

92. Would there be any other advantages?—Yes; the advantages of moving into town—the social advantages of town-life.

93. Do you think assistants in town are more likely to succeed in their profession than isolated teachers in the country?—That depends very much on the organization of the school to which they belong; if a teacher remains in charge of the same class I do not think he gets the same grip of the work as a teacher who takes charge of all classes at different times.

94. I want to be clear upon this point. You consider that an assistant in a large school in town, teaching one class, has a more arduous undertaking than a country teacher who has to manage a number of standards?—Yes; it is the experience of a number of the teachers themselves.

95. Would you be surprised to learn that that experience differs entirely from that of some of the most competent men who have given evidence before us?—Yes, I am surprised.

96. With regard to house allowance, do you think it would be reasonable to allow the same amount to a teacher in a district where the rents are comparatively low as would be allowed to teachers in large centres where the rents are high? In other words, do you think there should be a differential house allowance for teachers in charge of smaller-sized schools in, say, Nelson as compared with Wellington?—Yes, I think there should be.

97. You would base the amount of the house allowance on the rents paid?—Yes.

GEORGE TALBOT, Chairman of the Nelson Education Board.

*Mr. Talbot:* The secretary of the Board will be able to give the Commission full information as to the staffing in our district. As to the payment of salaries, they are lower than in other districts. Of course, we receive the same capitation, but we have a large number of scattered country schools. The salaries are consequently lower than in other districts, with the exception, I believe, of Taranaki and West Coast.

98. *The Chairman.*] I presume you have a great number of country schools to look after?—I think that, proportionately, the number is greater than in any other district in the colony, and it has a very serious effect on our funds. We have household schools in respect to which we pay £4 a head, and aided schools where we pay £4 a head and a Committee allowance of 11s. 6d. a head. On each of these aided schools we lose 16s. 6d. a head. We have comparatively few large schools. In the larger districts the schools help to support the smaller ones, and yield what we should call a good profit. The last year or two, through the causes mentioned, we have been at our wits' ends to know how to make both ends meet. We have always been able to make both ends meet till this last year, when we went to the bad £600 or £700.

99. Was that an exceptionally bad period?—Yes, in this way: there have been more of these new country schools opened, we have had smaller attendances in other schools, and our funds have been short in consequence.

100. I presume that the opening of these new schools has been due to the increased land-settlement going on?—The schools have been opened in freshly populated districts, but the land-settlement is not going on so largely as we could wish. We have an excellent climate, but no great extent of land.

101. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Do you think that your schools are unnecessarily divided in some of your centres?—Perhaps they are in a few instances.

102. What is the distance between the four Nelson side-schools: are they within a mile of each other?—I think that at the outside no one of these schools is more than a mile from another.

103. Is Toitoti Valley out of the town?—Oh, no; in the town.

104. Would it not be possible to amalgamate some of these schools?—Yes, I think so. It could also be done in the country in some places.