

105. The boys and girls are kept separate, are they not?—Yes; but only in a few instances. Nelson and Richmond are the only cases at present.

106. Do you think that necessary?—No; I did once, but not now.

106A. Are your aided schools more than three miles from each other by road?—I think most of them are that distance. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain the distances when the applications are sent in. It has been understood that they should be at least three miles apart, but in some cases I do not think they are.

107. Do you not think that the difficulty of aided schools should be got over? We in Otago have not adopted the system of the small schools?—I do not see how it could be got over, except by fixing a minimum attendance, as I understand you have done. We recently had an application to establish a household school for one child, and, of course, we drew the line at that.

108. It is recommended by the teachers of your district that there should be a minimum salary for certificated teachers of £70, and that if the proposed £5 subsidy does not amount to £70 the parents be required to make up the balance. Supposing, for instance, there were only two children, £5 would be paid by the Board, leaving £60 to be made up by the parents: do you think that would be possible?—I think our present system is better. We pay a capitation, and the parents are required to guarantee to make the amount up to £20, with board and lodgings. There is a difficulty in getting certificated teachers for household schools.

109. Do you think it essential to get certificated teachers?—It is not always possible to get them at a small salary, but we get them where possible.

110. Do you think it possible for parents to make up such a difference as £60?—No.

111. *Mr. Davidson.*] I find from the last available return that out of 123 schools in the Nelson District there are sixty-six with an average attendance of under 20 each: in your opinion, are these sixty-six schools absolutely necessary?—Well, yes. We might dispense with a few, but as a rule they are necessary. The people live so far apart in the back districts that the children would not be able to get any education but for the establishment of these smaller schools.

112. Have you ever given attention to the question of the conveyance of children to school?—Yes; it has been brought before our Board on several occasions.

113. Do you not think it would be possible to amalgamate some of these smaller schools, and to convey the children to the schools?—We made inquiries in one case as to cost, but we considered it would be cheaper to establish an extra school.

114. Apart from the question of cost, do you not think there is a difference in the education given in the larger and the smaller schools?—Yes; that given in the larger schools is far preferable.

115. Then, if the system of amalgamation were proved to be more economical, would you approve of the plan being tried?—Yes; I would have no objection to a trial.

116. Your city schools have an average attendance of 960: have you any knowledge of the system adopted of grouping children for instruction in Dunedin, Invercargill, Napier, Auckland, or any town of a size similar to that of Nelson?—No; I cannot say I have any particular knowledge of that system.

117. Then, you do not know that in a town of similar size there would not be more than one or two at the most mixed schools for 960 children?—In districts nearly as large as our own there are a lesser number of schools. I believe it would be an advantage to lessen the number.

118. What is your opinion as to separate schools?—I believe that mixed schools are better.

119. I find that your cost of inspection is £810 a year, or more than the £500 received by the Board: would you approve of the Inspectors being placed under the control of the department, and paid by the department instead of by the Board?—No, I cannot say I should.

120. *Mr. Stewart.*] Do you think that the colonial scale as proposed would be of advantage to your district?—Looking at it all round, I think it would be. Of course, we would not like to have the control taken away from us in a certain measure.

121. In what way would the proposed scale affect your control—the money would be paid to you, and you would pay it to the teachers?—Unless the Board had absolute power to transfer or promote, I do not think it would work altogether satisfactorily.

122. You have spoken of the number of schools in Nelson and Richmond: have you any idea of the population of Richmond?—Yes; 543 at the late census.

123. How far apart are the two Richmond schools?—70 yards; not more.

124. And yet you go to the expense of maintaining two schools with an average attendance of only 108?—If they were mixed we should have to have the two schools—one would not be large enough.

125. If they were mixed schools, would not one head-teacher be sufficient, working them as one school?—It would not be impossible, but they are rather far apart.

126. They are wooden buildings, and could be moved?—Yes, that could be done.

127. And a considerable saving would be effected?—Yes.

128. You think that the extreme distance between the four city side-schools is not more than a mile?—No; not more, say, than a mile and a half.

129. Do you not think that two of these side-schools would be sufficient—one on the east and one on the west of the town: would not that effect a great saving in salaries?—I have not gone into it, but it would certainly appear so; I would advocate that.

130. Would it not make the schools more efficient?—Yes.

131. Many of the teachers employed by your Board have been in your service for a considerable number of years?—Yes; a few.

132. Do you think the average age of the teachers is higher now than it was a few years ago?—I do not think it is higher; a sufficient number of young men come in, and the pupil-teachers pass on to be ordinary teachers.