

338. Is it a fact that the teachers are mostly young people who have only passed the Sixth Standard?—Yes; in these household schools we have young people in charge who have simply passed the Sixth Standard; that is common.

339. Viewed from an educational standpoint, do you think that wise?—I should prefer to have better material; but it simply amounts to this: that we have to do the best with the material available; and it is far better for these children to get some education than none at all.

340. Do you know of any cases of these household schools where individual members of the family are teachers?—Yes, I know of two cases we have now.

341. Do you think that it is desirable?—No, I do not; but it came about in this way: Formerly the schools were larger, and were always staffed by teachers from outside, but as the schools dwindled it became very much more difficult to get outsiders; consequently, members of the family were employed to teach. As a rule, however, the Board has always opposed the appointment of a member of the family, and it has only done so as a last emergency.

342. In these household schools we are given to understand that board and residence is found for the teacher?—Yes.

343. Has it ever come under your notice that the teacher of one of these schools practically pays for board and lodging by the work she does—domestic duties altogether outside her school duties?—Yes, in some cases.

344. In many?—I have heard it mentioned incidentally that such cases have occurred, but we have tried to prevent it as far as possible, and we have stipulated that the teachers shall not be expected to do anything outside of their school duties. In one case I know the householder engaged to pay £10 a year more if certain household duties were performed, but the applicant declined to take it.

345. Do you not think that it would be better to absolutely prohibit the performance of household duties, inasmuch as the householder in some cases—I do not say in all cases—would wink at the education being carried on so long as the household duties were satisfactorily performed?—As a general rule, I think it would be wise to have such a prohibition.

346. Speaking as the Inspector for the district, you are decidedly of opinion that a scheme for the amalgamation of these schools is in the public interest—in the interests of education and of the children of the district?—Yes, most decidedly.

347. And if a colonial scale brought such a state of affairs about you would be of opinion that it would be an advance not only in the direction of offering further inducement to teachers, but it would bring about a state of affairs eminently desirable from an educational standpoint?—Yes; in my opinion it is advisable to amalgamate.

348. You say you have advised this course before?—Yes.

349. What was the difficulty in carrying it out?—The consent of the School Committees usually, or getting the Board to agree. I do not think the question of the amalgamation of the Nelson town schools has ever been directly proposed.

350. But if it were you would give it your cordial support?—I would not say that, for I fail to see, from the figures placed before me, that any very great advantage would be gained.

351. You approve of all these little side-schools up to Standard II.?—I think they could be more efficiently worked, though probably you would lose in attendance.

352. Why?—On account of the distance.

353. But we have been told this morning that there is not such a great distance?—No; but even a half-mile further would affect the attendance of five-year-old children. By a suggestion of mine five of these infant-schools were reduced to four.

354. Do you not think all the difficulties might be met by two schools?—Yes.

355. *Mr. Hill.*] How many pupils do you think a properly trained teacher could manage efficiently in an unaided school—I mean, what would be your ideal number in a mixed school?—From 25 to 30.

356. How many schools have you in this district where the attendance is below that?—That is a question of figures, readily found from the returns.

357. I suppose you have over sixty?—Somewhere about that number—seventy-three, I think.

358. Could you give us an estimate as to how many schools it would be possible to merge in accordance with the plan suggested by Mr. Davidson?—You might be able to reduce the number by one-third. I could not tell exactly unless I went carefully into the figures.

359. In the boys' department you have certificated male teachers?—Yes.

360. Have you any female teachers in the boys' department?—Yes.

361. Have you any male teachers in the girls' department?—No, not at present.

362. Have you any special reasons why not?—I do not think there are any strong reasons.

363. Is there any more reason why female teachers should not be employed in the boys' department than male teachers in the girls'?—No, I do not think so.

364. Do you think your schools are better controlled by a master being in charge?—Yes, I think so.

365. At the present time you have a headmaster in the boys' school and a headmistress in the girls' school, who work independently of each other?—Yes.

366. Who instructs the pupil-teachers in the boys' school?—The head-teacher or headmistress of the Toitoti Valley School.

367. Sometimes the headmistress takes the boys as well as the girls?—Yes; the headmaster and headmistress by arrangement divide the work between them, one taking all the pupil-teachers in the city every alternate year.

368. I suppose the headmistress would be willing to take the boys, but is not willing to give over her authority to the master to take the girls?—I do not know about that.

369. You think the schools could be worked more efficiently if combined?—Yes.