

455. What form do you think the assistance should take?—A capable assistant teacher. We have to adopt the pupil-teacher system largely on account of economy.

456. Otherwise, apart from the view of economy, you do not see that it is an advantage in putting in a pupil-teacher?—There is one advantage—the grading is less abrupt.

457. Do you think that a pupil-teacher in a school is to some extent a source of weakness?—We have not, as a rule, found that so; they are better trained if they can begin in larger schools.

458. *Mr. Davidson.*] Have you ever compared the amounts per head paid in the different districts for incidental expenses of schools?—No.

459. Have you ever compared the salaries paid to teachers in the Wanganui district with those paid to the teachers in Nelson?—No.

460. Would you be surprised to learn that the capitation allowance to School Committees in Nelson is twice that paid in Wanganui?—I am not at all surprised.

461. Is it your opinion that the amount paid to School Committees in this district is too high?—As a rule; I do not say in all cases. Our scale is graded—from 5s. 6d. a head in the case of large schools to 11s. 6d. in the case of small ones; average for the whole, 7s. 10d.

462. The average cost for School Committees per head is higher in Nelson than anywhere else?—Yes.

463. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] Do you think, from your experience, that it is possible to amalgamate any of the education districts and extend the functions of secretaries?—Yes, I think it possible.

464. Do you think the same thing might be done in the matter of inspection? Suppose, for instance, we amalgamated—I do not say we would—Marlborough and Nelson—could one secretary perform the joint functions, do you think?—I think it would be possible; but not to reduce the number of Inspectors.

465. Do you think it would be advisable to periodically, or, say, once in seven years, exchange Inspectors between districts, or to exchange secretaries, say, between Canterbury and Otago, and *vice versa*?—I have never considered the question of the exchange of secretaries.

466. You would not like to give an opinion upon it, perhaps?—No.

467. Failing the question for an exchange of secretaries, would you consider it proper to put the Inspectors under central authority?—I think there is much to be said on both sides of the question; but I do not think it is a question you should ask me.

468. It is held that, through secretaries remaining too long in their respective districts, teachers may not receive the treatment and fair-play they should do: what is your opinion?—It is a phase of the education question that has never come before me.

L. D. EASTON, representing the Nelson Branch of the Educational Institute, Lower Moutere.

*Mr. Easton:* I might say, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that I appear on behalf of the country teachers. The list of recommendations has been handed in by Mr. Gibbes. I would like to refer to the second and third recommendations. I think it is the second which says that a teacher's salary for the whole of each year should be calculated upon the average of the previous year, but that, in the event of a sudden and considerable change in the number of scholars, the Board, or the Minister, be empowered to make the necessary changes in staff and salaries. Now, sir, a proposal was made by the teachers to submit to you that the payment of salaries should not, as at present, fluctuate from quarter to quarter, but that at the beginning of the year the salary for the whole of the ensuing year should be fixed according to the average of the preceding year. That is done in the other colonies where there are systems of education administered from the Central Department, and it would be much more satisfactory, the teachers think, if they knew at the beginning of the year the salaries they were going to receive for the whole of the year. In regard to the next recommendation on the list (No. 3), there may be considerable difference of opinion in certain parts of the Nelson Educational District. As you are aware, in the Nelson District there are large quantities of fruit and hops grown—in New Zealand altogether there are about 1,050 acres, and in Nelson about 1,000 of these. I tried to ascertain what was the acreage under raspberries, but have not been able to do so. I know from my own experience that there is a very large acreage. The fruit-picking begins before Christmas. There is the raspberry- and the blackberry-picking, and then the hop-picking; and in consequence of this the schools are affected from before Christmas until the first week in April. The presence of the children in the gardens is absolutely necessary. The cultivation of the raspberries could not be carried on unless it were with the assistance of the children in the matter of picking; and the teachers think it a very great hardship that they should be, to a certain extent, punished in the matter of a reduction of salary owing to the enforced absence of children from the schools. The teachers are at the school ready and willing to do their work, and only too anxious that the children should come. As the representative of the teachers, I have to ask that your Commission, in the calculation of the average upon which the payment of salaries might be based, will take this question into consideration: that in any school which was largely affected by the fruit-growing and the hop-growing industries the attendances for the first quarter of the year should be omitted from the calculation of the average of those schools. The fact of the school being adversely affected by these circumstances might be certified to by the Education Board. In submitting this to the Commission we feel that we are not asking anything that is unreasonable. Another matter that I have to lay before you is with reference to the proposal, under this colonial scale of staff and salaries, in connection with certificates. There is no provision for accepting certificates of equal rank. For instance, in the schools of from 35 to 75 it says that a certificate of D2 is required by the headmaster. The teachers think that an E1, which by the department's regulation is held to be of equal rank with the D2, should be accepted, and that the salary attaching to an E1 certificate should not be subject to the deduction of 1 per cent. In the certificate regulations of the department there are nine ranks of certificates, but the teachers seem to be of opinion that under this proposed colonial scale the classes are separated too completely, and that there is no acknowledgment made as to the value of the rank of the certificate such as there is in the department's regulations.