

gence of the pupils has been developed—that he is to examine. This clause does not direct the Inspector to test the quantity of information each child has acquired. Clause 11: The Inspector may, but only if the circumstances seem to call for such exceptional action, examine all the pupils of the school or of any class. The classification must be weak or the school in an unsatisfactory condition before the Inspector takes such an extreme step. I am glad to think that you have already pronounced decisively your opinion in favour of this; and, indeed, I think in a general way of nearly everything else in the syllabus. I need not weary you further by going over all the points on which we are agreed. The points of disagreement, if I may say so without appearing to cast any reflection upon the intelligence of the critics of the syllabus, appear to have arisen almost entirely from reading suggestions as if they were mandatory regulations. I confess that I should not find any difficulty in making in any school a time-table to comply with the syllabus as I understand it, and as a very large number of persons (highly experienced teachers among the number) have informed me that they understand it. I think that, if the altered attitude of the Inspector and the teacher be taken into account, no difficulties need arise except such as belong to a period of transition, when some teachers are slower than others in accommodating themselves to the new conditions, and some perhaps rather reluctant to think out again questions as to methods of teaching that they fondly hoped had been settled for them once for all. But once more I would repeat that it is not a question of quantity, but of spirit and quality; and if the syllabus does not appear to allow sufficient freedom for the purpose for which it has been framed, by all means let us carefully consider the best way in which it can be reduced in bulk. The motions standing in the name of Mr. Fleming I would commend to your earnest consideration as meeting this view. I suggest that there be a general discussion in due order on the several points raised by the resolutions that have been tabled on this subject, and then if necessary the matter may be remitted to a committee to prepare and bring up a report.

I think I should remind you, without going into very great detail, of some of the other changes that have taken place within the last three years. Since we last met the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act has placed the staff and the salaries of our school-teachers, in spite of possible imperfections that may have shown themselves in the working, in a much better position than they have ever been placed in before. One or two of the resolutions on the order paper may be the means of elucidating the opinions of this Conference on some points. The other changes that have taken place are in the extension of the system of district high schools, and more recently in the institution of free secondary education for those who gain certificates of proficiency and qualify themselves in other ways that are named. There has also been instituted a system of scholarships giving free technical education to those who, instead of attending a secondary school, wish to take such a course, and have qualified themselves for it by gaining a certificate of proficiency. I do not suppose that any of you are ignorant of the existence of these scholarships, but only one or two of the Boards, so far, have instituted them. I thought it desirable that I should call attention to this fact. I do not think it necessary to go into all the details, but I will ask your attention to the ideas that underlie the privileges that have been granted. I know you will sympathize with me in this fact: that we who are Inspectors—I feel it myself as Inspector-General sometimes—while we are perfectly willing to get an expression of opinion on the part of the Press, do sometimes feel that we are handicapped in not always having an opportunity of explaining certain points upon which I am sure the Press would welcome an explanation if we were able to give it. It has been said by certain critics that a number of detached things, free secondary education, technical scholarships, district high schools, Board scholarships, national scholarships, and so on, have been, so to speak, foisted upon the public-school system of New Zealand without any plan or co-ordination. As that has been said, I would ask you just for a moment to consider that these things are not detached, but that they belong to a consistent system, of which, it may be true, all the parts are not yet perfectly co-ordinated, but which, at all events, has reached a certain degree of co-ordination—and with your co-operation I hope a further degree of co-ordination will be reached very soon. For instance, let us consider the boy (or girl) of ability somewhat above the average. If he is living in a town within reach of a secondary school proper, he may, on showing proper qualification, obtain free secondary education—first for two years, and then, if he proves himself fit to go further, for another two years or even three years. He may do that simply by obtaining a certificate of proficiency, or by qualifying in one of the ways provided in the secondary-school regulations. If he is in a place in which there is not a secondary school proper, he may obtain a degree of free secondary education in a district high school. These two means of providing free secondary education will leave out those who are too far away from either a secondary school or a district high school, and they will also leave out those who are compelled to go to work immediately after finishing their primary course. But the granting of these free places in secondary schools and district high schools would set free—if the Boards' regulations with regard to scholarships were adjusted accordingly—nearly all the funds, £8,000 in all, granted for scholarships. If that £8,000 were nearly all granted for scholarships to country pupils otherwise out of the reach of secondary schools or district high schools, at £35 to £40 a year, it would give, say, 200 scholarships. The National and Queen's Scholarships will provide during the period of school life about another 170 scholarships. And, if you will examine carefully into the number of those who will be qualified in the country districts from the passes of Standard VI.—taking into account those who are not willing to go—you will find that about fifty more scholarships per annum would probably provide for all of those in the country as completely as those in the town are provided for. So that we are not far from having a system that makes complete provision all over the colony for those qualified for free secondary education. For those whose parents are not in a position to send them to the secondary schools without some help for their maintenance, the National Scholarships provide that help, and in this district the Queen's Scholarships, in connection with the Victoria College, provide similar help. If, therefore, we can slightly increase the provision for those in the remote country districts who are fitted for secondary education, the system will not be far from being complete.