

145. You admit, of course, the importance of agricultural instruction?—Most certainly.

146. How do you suggest, then, from the colonial point of view, that the object which Mr. Wilson and all of us have in view can be best attained under a general scheme?—By training the teachers and giving them the necessary preparation—that is, you should have teachers adapted to country life, and you should have teachers adapted to town life; and you will be able to do that the moment you have a proper scheme of training for the teachers.

147. Then, the expert work should be done by the teachers. You have heard the suggestion that I have read from my speech in the House?—Yes.

148. Would you agree with that as a good beginning in the work?—It would be an excellent beginning, but it has a danger—viz., that of overworking the teacher. If you take the teacher, there being such a heavy strain as there is at the present moment—and the tendency is to break down much earlier than was formerly the case—and require him to work during his holidays, I am afraid of the result. My suggestion is that he should come in on Saturdays to a centre, and take that same kind of instruction. It is a relaxation from the isolation of country life.

149. It is proposed, of course, to do this partly by way of a holiday—to give opportunities, for instance, of coming to town at cheap rates on the railway?—We tried it in Hawke's Bay, and the teachers were simply wearied out. Twenty-four years ago, in the summer-time, we had five weeks' training in that way in order to train the teachers in those subjects in which defects were found in the schools. We tried the experiment again, during the midwinter holidays last year, in the case of the country teachers who had been unable to attend the Saturday classes which are carried on regularly. Those teachers who had been unable to avail themselves of the classes the Board brought into town, and the teachers underwent a course of training in certain special subjects that were deemed necessary for the country schools; but at the close of the session the teachers were so tired that it seemed to me unfair to expect them to go back into the schools and do their work the moment the classes were ended.

150. Then you do not concur in Mr. Wilson's scheme about the peripatetic teacher?—No.

151. What would you suggest supposing you were asked this question: Give the general outline of a scheme by which agricultural instruction would become universal and efficient?—Bring the specialist into the town; bring your teachers into the town on Saturdays and give them a course of special lectures, and every week those teachers will go back and impart the information that they have received from the specialist to the children in the school, but adapted to each district and locality.

152. Mr. Wilson also made a suggestion with regard to the instruction of farmers at different farmhouses. Do you believe that the instruction of the grown-up men and the farmers of the country would be of utility?—I think if you infuse into the children a little practical knowledge they will disseminate it among their parents, and it is quite possible for the parents to become interested. You well said just now, and I quite appreciated the force of it, that it is no use forcing any kind of education into a district—no kind of subject should be thrust upon a district unless there is a demand for it.

153. Do you agree that the demand is better exemplified by the willingness of persons to pay something for it?—I think so. They get indifferent to a thing they are offered, and a feeling grows up among the people that the specialists come round because they have nothing else to do.

154. You regard it rather as spoon-feeding them?—I dislike it very much. I think that if a man wants education in a certain direction he will make an effort to get it.

155. Do you think it is possible to get local divisions, counties, or gatherings to provide something of the kind?—I do. We are trying to foster it, and we have found no difficulty as yet. I happen to be on the Science Committee in Napier. Our Education Board, the controlling authority in the district, has, in my opinion, wisely appointed a controlling body of representatives from the town. We have several members of the Board; we have a representative of the High School, a representative of the borough, and myself. On making application to the Napier Borough they gave us a grant-in-aid; on making representations to the Waipawa County Council they also gave us a grant; and the Dannevirke Borough also granted us a sum. No one has refused as yet. This shows me that by fostering the thing a little and exercising a little careful discretion, and letting the people see the advantage of this technical education, they begin to appreciate the work and see the need of helping it. I might say that I thought it proper in the interests of scientific education to give lectures in these various places. I have given lectures to show the scientific benefits that might be derived by the people in the town, and I have found this lecturing very beneficial. Our Board at the present time is sending a specialist down to Dannevirke to exemplify by a lecture the advantage of technical education. We have had magic-lantern slides prepared, and our Director of Technical Education in Napier has been authorised within the past week to give a lecture in the Dannevirke Borough, and he will address the teachers so as to make them certain as to the direction of the new regulations with regard to drawing, &c.

156. You would place agricultural instruction, if not as the most important subject, in the most important portion of the general scheme of technical instruction?—Yes, but not the specialisation of agriculture. There are so many things included under "Specialisation" as, for instance, the ploughing of the land. That includes, not merely the turning-over of the soil, but it implies a knowledge of the characteristics of the soil and of the plants which that soil will grow, hence my reason for saying that if you want to train children in specialised agriculture they must first know the plants that surround them, the grasses and the weeds by the wayside. How many farmers know them? We have the Agricultural Department sending out certain pamphlets about noxious weeds. If all information were properly prepared and issued to the schools, children would get a knowledge of it, because they would collect specimens as they see them by the way, especially if the illustrations were issued in natural colours.