

- “(2.) The whole wealth of the State should be made available for educating all the youth of the State ; and
- “(3.) The individual communities requiring schools should contribute according to their means toward the support of their own schools.”

In Massachusetts, although the State contribution is small, two very wholesome rules are observed in its distribution—namely, (a) a portion of the State funds is divided among the townships on the basis of the ratio which the township's school tax bears to its whole tax ; (b) another portion recognises the principle that the poorer the community the more it needs the help of the State to maintain its schools. This still leaves undetermined the relation which should exist between the total amounts of State aid and local school taxation. Bound up with this question to some extent is the proportion of State and of local control of the schools ; but hardly anywhere is that proportion directly determined by the proportions which the State and the county or township respectively contribute ; in nearly all democratic countries the chief control of the schools rests with a local or district authority, with the township or county, or both together. The States of Australia, where finance and control are both functions of the central departments, present the first exception that comes naturally into our minds. In New Zealand, on the contrary, almost the whole cost of education is borne by the State, and nearly all the control is in the hands of the local authorities—Education Boards and School Committees. In spite of the disproportionate size of some of the education districts, this plan has on the whole worked extremely well ; it might, conceivably, be desirable to readjust the districts, or to alter details such as the mode of election of members of Boards and Committees ; but he would be a rash man who would propose, save, perhaps, in one respect, to lessen the amount of local control of our schools.

The Department should be the guardian of the public funds—that is, it should have power to see that the funds voted by Parliament are spent to the best effect for the purposes for which they are voted ; it should disseminate information useful to administrators and teachers ; it should issue regulations in all matters in which a certain degree of uniformity is desirable ; and it should be in a position to co-ordinate the several parts of the whole system so as to make a complete whole. At present it is unable to do this except in a partial manner, as it exercises no inspection over the great majority of the schools—viz., the public schools of the Dominion. It is almost true that the Department has no eyes to see clearly matters it has to deal with every day. But it would be a mistake to think that this question would be solved by the simple method of transferring the Inspectors of Schools from the Boards to the Department. Although the Inspectors of the Boards have not the autocratic powers possessed by the Superintendents of Schools in America, yet they are the expert advisers of the Boards ; it would be a poor service to the education system of the Dominion to take away the “eyes” of the local authorities, which have, and should continue to have, the main control of the schools, in order to give even the necessary degree of vision to the Department. Even in Great Britain, where His Majesty's Inspectors are officers of the Education Department, the local Councils or Education Committees have their own Inspectors or other expert advisers. But it should not be impossible to devise a plan that would overcome both difficulties. If each Board had as its chief executive officer an educational expert with duties akin to, but not so wide as, those of the Superintendent of Schools in an American city or county, the Board would not lose its adviser when the Inspectors were transferred to the central Department. It is not a sound principle that so-many hundreds of thousands of the State's money should be spent, and yet that the State should have no direct means of knowing that it is spent to the best advantage.

The only two branches of the education system in New Zealand that at present receive contributions out of rates levied by local authorities are the industrial schools branch and the technical branch : in the former case, payments are made out of rates by the Charitable Aid Boards for the support in whole or in part of indigent children sent to industrial schools ; but the questions involved therein are evidently connected with other questions that do not properly come within the sphere of education.

As to technical schools, it has been the practice to require that sites for technical schools should be provided locally, and they are often provided by local authorities, which also in many instances vote moneys out of rates in aid of the maintenance of technical classes, subsidies of £1 for £1 being paid by the Government on sums so voted. It may be expedient in the future to extend this principle ; if so, it should be put upon a more systematic basis. In like manner, it is possible that the vexed question