

I think the University has probably done splendid work in the past, and that is one of the very best reasons for our desire that it shall do its best possible work in the future.

21. Then it is not because of past failures that you ask us to make this change?—I do not quite understand what you mean by “past failures.”

22. I wanted to know whether there are any evidences, either in the work of the students that have gone through the colleges or in the work of the University or other ways, that it has been defective in its results?—Well, Mr. Chairman, the kind of evidence that Mr. Sidey wants is exceedingly hard to get. I was speaking entirely as to principles. I think this is a matter that can be discussed entirely on the basis of the principles involved.

23. Are you aware of instances where our students have not been able to hold their own with the students of other universities in every department of industrial life?—I think that is almost an impossible question to answer, because it is the sort of thing upon which you cannot get evidence. I reply in this way: that it does not matter what system of education a man has gone under, if he is an able man he comes through it an able man; no system of education seems to harm the best type of student permanently.

24. How long have you been in New Zealand?—A little over five years.

25. Are you aware that our students have taken leading positions in almost every department of university work?—Yes, I am aware of that.

26. Then I may conclude that it is not at all because of the failure of the University to supply what the students require that you think the alteration should now be made?—I do not think you are entitled to that assumption.

27. If I am not entitled to that assumption I should like you to give us some concrete instances where the University has not been equal to what might reasonably have been expected of it?—It is a matter of comparison with other universities to a very great extent, what other universities are doing, and what they consider right to do in the matter of university education.

28. I do not suppose there is any use in pressing that further, but I should like to say that the students of our University, as far as I have been able to gather, have been able to hold their own with students of other universities whenever they have come into competition with them. Now, I understand you to say that before any reform whatever should be undertaken in connection with the University the first thing that should be done would be the reconstitution of it?—That is not quite the statement of what I said. I practically said that before more money was spent on the University the first thing to be done was to reconstitute it. I believe in that most strongly.

29. And the reconstitution you suggest is on the lines suggested in the pamphlet?—I say we are advocating that the most impartial possible inquiry should be brought to bear on that question. We are absolutely content that any scheme should be adopted which is put forward by the right type of tribunal.

30. I do not suppose you suggest that even the urgent needs of the University should not be met until then?—No, that is obvious, I think, unless you intend, of course, to let the system fall to pieces.

31. Now, is it not a fact that in Royal Commissions one can almost always approximate very closely as to what the finding of the Commission will be when you know the personnel of it?—I should think there was something to be said for that opinion. But if you take the best means of getting the personnel on a Commission such as would be recommended by an utterly outside body with great experience in these matters, and only interested in the thing from the point of view of doing the best possible for New Zealand, I think you would be getting the right personnel on the Commission to make sure of getting the right kind of report; but at the same time it must be obvious that if you brought a man from outside who was not familiar with the actual local conditions his views would very considerably change if he made a thorough inquiry into the local conditions.

32. Well, would it be possible to choose a man from outside such as you suggest whose views on the subject of examinations are not known?—I should think it would be very hard to.

33. You would know beforehand what his views on that question are?—I think the point is that there is practically no view in favour of external examinations in other countries nowadays.

34. Do you think he is likely to modify his views after he has a knowledge of the local conditions?—I do not think personally that he is the least likely to modify his views, but Mr. McCallum does think so. I am content to abide by the decision.

35. Where do you suggest this Commission should go for its evidence?—It should visit particularly the four centres in New Zealand, and we would suggest if possible that it make some inquiry in Australia, where the conditions are probably more similar to ours in the matter of university work than anywhere else in the world.

36. Do you think that a Royal Commission is likely to get more evidence in New Zealand than this Committee?—I think it is practically certain to, because all the evidence taken publicly has been taken in Wellington, whereas this Commission would visit every quarter and give every man an opportunity of putting his evidence before it.

37. Have you had any knowledge of what the result of previous Royal Commissions set up in this country has been?—I have had no such knowledge. I think it would depend to a great extent upon the type of Royal Commission set up.

38. You know there was a previous Commission set up to go into the question of university reform?—Yes, it was set up in the year I was born, and it recommended most of the things that we are asking for now.

39. Were they all given effect to?—No, they were not, but the reasons are perfectly clear. Some of those recommendations, for instance, were recommendations that should take effect upon certain other things being done, particularly the establishment of colleges in the North Island.