

6. With regard to scholarships, I should like you to make that point clear respecting clause 97. Perhaps, however, it would be better for me to explain what is meant than to ask you. The way the Bill proposes to award scholarships is on a qualification. For the present that qualification would have to be—say, a Junior Free Place Examination conducted by the Department, and the evidence referred to would be supplied by the marks that the candidate got in that examination. It does not say that he shall produce evidence: it says, “they have given evidence.” Well, they have given evidence in the examination, indicated by the marks obtained?—That is so. That is the way we read it.

7. *Mr. McCallum.*] Is your Board satisfied with the boundaries?—Our boundaries are not interfered with, so we have not said anything on that subject.

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FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1914.

ALEXANDER BELL, Secretary, Southland Education Board, examined. (No. 24.)

1. *The Acting-Chairman (Mr. Statham).*] You are Secretary of the Southland Education Board?—Yes. Prior to receiving my present appointment I was Inspector and Secretary to the South Canterbury Education Board. I propose dealing with points of the Bill not alluded to by Mr. Fisher—Section 6 (b) (iii), capitation grants to Boards: the average attendance is an unfair basis on which to make grants to Education Boards to cover costs of administration and allowances to School Committees. A grant per school, plus a capitation, would be more equitable. The expenditure under these heads varies as much with the number of schools as it does with the total attendance. Therefore Boards controlling a proportionately large number of small schools are at a great disadvantage compared with Boards controlling a proportionately greater number of large schools: *e.g.*, compare Southland and Wellington:—Southland—District schools, 181; attendance, 9,555; capitation at 11s., £5,733; schools over 200, 5. Wellington—District schools, 170; attendance, 16,198; capitation at 11s., £9,719; schools over 200, 14. Manifestly under the proposals of the Bill these two Boards are not placed on similar financial footings. Southland therefore protests strongly against the proposals in the Bill. A capitation grant on the attendance, plus a grant per school, would work out more fairly than the present system. Grant of £250 withdrawn: the withdrawal of the grant of £250 hitherto paid affects very inequitably the various districts: *e.g.*, this is equal to reductions in capitation allowance as follows: Auckland, 1½d.; Otago, 3½d.; Hawke's Bay, 6d.; and Southland, 6d. The proposed capitation allowance in the Bill undoubtedly accentuates the present unfair financial advantage of the more populous districts. Section 31 (6): The existing provision by which Boards may transfer 7 per cent. of the building-maintenance grant to the building special grants should be continued; otherwise, how are Boards to provide for extras on new buildings when Government grants are insufficient? The Bill allows the Board to pay these extra moneys out of the general fund, but our general fund in Southland is insufficient for the purpose. Clause 34 (b), School Committees' allowances: The adoption of this clause will perpetuate the present extremely unfair method of providing for these allowances. A Dominion scale of allowances should be provided by the Government, for the following reasons: (1) There is the same dissatisfaction now in some education districts because Committees in adjoining districts receive larger grants, as there was formerly among teachers because their salaries were lower than those paid in adjoining districts. I have an example here which I may give. A school with an average of forty in Otago receives £22, while a school of the same size in Southland receives £14. There is a difference there of £8, and there is possibly only a river between the two schools; in some cases there is only a road. (2.) Boards controlling relatively great numbers of large schools can pay higher allowances than Boards controlling relatively great numbers of small schools. Small schools earn less in capitation than they receive in allowances, and this loss to the Board has to be made up from the profit on the large schools. Consequently, the greater the number of large schools the greater the profit and the more liberally the smaller schools can be treated—*e.g.*, adopting Southland's present scale, a school of twenty earns £6 and receives £11, and a school of 400 earns £120 and receives £73. (3.) The inequality and inadequacy of the grants lead at present to so much friction between Boards and Committees as to make administration difficult, and all this trouble would be obviated by the adoption of a Dominion scale as now urged. There is a great deal of friction in Southland at present owing to the small allowances to School Committees. (4.) The proposals in the Bill, instead of reducing these differences in grants, will increase them and also the difficulties of some of the Boards. The Bill strengthens the finances of the large Boards, but it does not strengthen the finances of the small Boards, so that there is likely to be greater differences in these allowances to School Committees. (5.) Further, when allowances for both administration and Committees are paid on a capitation basis, the cost of administration in a district with a large number of small schools is greater than in a district with the same attendance in fewer schools, consequently in the former the money available for Committees is much less than in the latter. (6.) The present time is opportune for the adoption of the proposed change by the Government, because the allowances are being increased by the Bill, and it will be found that a Dominion scale can be drawn up that will reduce the present allowances in very few instances. On the other hand, if the Bill is passed in its present form, this opportunity may not occur again for many years. I have worked out what the cost to Southland would be if we adopted Otago's scale of grants to Committees; it would absorb a capitation of 8s. 2d. to equal Otago's present allowances. Under the Bill Otago will be able to increase those allowances, and Southland would probably require to take 9s. out of its capitation to make the allowances Otago will be able to make under the proposals in the Bill. That shows the