

20. What about the rebuilding of schools?—Mr. Hogben has explained that the money already granted for rebuilding will be handed over with the other property. The Board from which we get these schools will have to hand over the accumulated funds they have for rebuilding.

21. Have you any more figures to give with reference to the change of boundaries?—There is the question of area. The area of the new Southland District will be over 15,000 square miles. Southland will be one of the largest, if not the largest, education districts in the Dominion. The area of the new Otago District is just a little over 11,000 square miles.

22. Have you any observations to offer with regard to the scale of salaries adopted for women teachers?—I have not made a very close study of the new scale of salaries, but I have noticed the point raised the other day that women teachers are not to receive the same increases that some of the men are.

23. Would you endorse what that witness in the main said?—I would require to consider it before I could say that.

24. *Mr. Sidey.*] Have you anything to remark upon the disabilities of the backblocks settler?—The Bill gives the Minister greater power to restrict the establishment of small schools, and at the same time the policy of the Government is to push settlement as far as possible into the backblocks. In Southland we have a great area of backblocks country which is gradually being brought under settlement.

JOHN FISHER, Southland, examined. (No. 25.)

1. *The Acting-Chairman (Mr. Statham).*] Whom do you represent?—I am representing the Southland Education Board and the Southland Technical College.

2. Have you a statement to make?—In order to save time, Mr. Bell, the Secretary of the Southland Education Board, and myself have divided the Bill; I will take certain sections, and Mr. Bell will take others. Further than that, we have had a conference with Mr. Hogben, the Inspector-General, with the result that several points have been cleared up and will not now need to be referred to by us. With regard to clause 11, District Councils: The Board opposes strongly the proposal to constitute District Councils, because the proposal casts a reflection upon the integrity of the Boards. With regard to clause 13 (a), the ward system for Board elections should be abolished, because it creates parochialism and places the election of Board members in the hands of too limited a constituency. Clause 14: The Southland Board suggests that Board members should be elected by householders. The teachers could compile the rolls and act as returning officers. Thus a more equal franchise for both rural and urban districts would be arranged for. Clause 34: The proposal in the Bill to limit the expenditure of moneys by departmental regulations is an unwarranted curtailment of the Board's powers. The present Act allows Boards, within the provisions of the law, to expend moneys "as they think fit." The check exercised by the Auditor-General should be a sufficient guarantee for the integrity of Boards without further interference from the central authority. Clause 43: Provision should be made for monthly or fixed meetings of Committees; otherwise, under paragraph 12 of the Fourth Schedule, a Chairman might, by using his powers to convene meetings at unsuitable times, unseat a member of the Committee. Clause 47: Whenever a School Committee refuses to carry out its duties Boards should have power to assume control of the school and the school fund, and such Committee should lose its office. Clause 49: There should be provision for the withdrawal of School Committee's funds from the Post Office Savings-bank by cheque, or for the Board to act as banker for the Committees in the same way as commercial firms act as bankers for their clients. Clauses 53 (2) and 75 (9): This is an excellent proposal with regard to model schools, especially in districts where there is no training college. The extra pay to the teachers, however, should be provided by the Government. Clause 67: The Boards' present power to transfer teachers from any position to any position should not be restricted to the cases mentioned in the Bill, nor should Boards be compelled to advertise for applicants for vacancies. Clause 74: Probationers' salaries are at present altogether inadequate to attract male applicants, and there does not appear to be any reason for reducing a pupil-teacher's lodging-allowance by £5 after each year's service. Out of almost fifty pupil-teachers and probationers at present employed in Southland only seven are males. £25 for a boy of sixteen or seventeen who has spent two or three years in a secondary school is nowadays absurdly low pay, especially when much larger pay is offering by other Government Departments for young persons with lower qualifications. Clause 75 (8): The proposal in this section will so materially increase the payments for temporary teachers that the small allowance provided for relieving teachers will be quite inadequate unless the clause is amended to indicate that in cases where the headmaster is absent for less than a week the assistant should not necessarily receive the headmaster's pay. Clause 127: The Board opposes very strongly the proposals in the Bill for the centralizing of Inspectors, for the following reasons: (1) Boards will not have the same confidence in the advice received from officers not under their control; (2) friction is likely to arise between Boards and Inspectors, since the latter can no longer be directed to give effect to policies framed and inaugurated by the Boards; (3) under the new conditions the Director of Education may become an autocrat, and, however unwise or impracticable his schemes may be, he will be able to impose them on the country; (4) the Inspectors will lose their freedom to criticize the Director's proposals, and will thus be less able to fashion the education policy; this would be a serious loss. Most of the objects mentioned by the Minister in his speech introducing the Bill in the House could be attained without this drastic proposal to rob Boards of the power to appoint and control their Inspectors. If the Department paid Inspectors in accordance with the Dominion scale, such as is proposed in the Bill, the Minister could make it a condition that the Inspectors should do the work of supervision,