

73. Can you give any instance where they would be in a majority?—Where they contribute the money they might. In our case our contribution was so overwhelming we could have swamped the Board.

74. If the Education Board provides the money, should it not control the school?—What is the use of a Technical School Board, then? It would become the Education Board, so why create a new Board? That is why we suggest that the Board's quota should be reduced to a third for Managers over nine in number.

FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1914.

CHARLES SMEATON, School-teacher, Dunedin, examined. (No. 26.)

1. *The Acting-Chairman (Mr. Statham).*] Do you represent a group of teachers?—I am here, with Mr. Hunter, representing the male assistant teachers of Dunedin and suburbs. The male assistants of Dunedin and suburbs wish to express their appreciation and thanks to the Minister of Education for the very generous attempt he has made to improve the conditions of teaching in the Dominion of New Zealand. We consider that a very fair attempt indeed has been made to cope with the difficulties involved in the increased cost of living, and in many cases the allowances made to teachers generally have been quite generously provided. But there are several matters that we desire to direct attention to, and we have to repeat something that has been said very often better perhaps. We do not feel satisfied with the system of classification, and would be better pleased with a system of classification based on service and efficiency. We are prepared to acknowledge that there are difficulties in the way of such a system of classification, but at the same time we think it would be better that an attempt should be made to get over those difficulties rather than that the present system should be retained, a system based on the average attendance of schools. If the Department or the Minister cannot see their way to bring in the system of classification which we consider is an improvement, then I suggest that the schools be classified not on the basis of the average attendance but on the basis of the roll number. We will take one illustration. Supposing a school of 510 children on the roll, and the teachers are paid on an average attendance at that school of 460, the teachers would be teaching fifty children under circumstances of greater difficulty than the first 460 children; but, although the work of training that extra fifty children is necessary, the Department does not pay for that training. With regard to the work of the assistant male teachers, we consider that the first assistant has to do very responsible work in the school. Under the previous Bill the disability between the first assistant and the headmaster in the matter of salary was too great. We now find that the disability has been increased, and we cannot see that there is any sufficiently good reason for it. We may be told that the headmaster has the whole responsibility of the organization of the school. I maintain that there is not a first assistant in my experience who is not capable of attending to the organization of the school in which he is teaching, and the first assistants very often are of great assistance to the headmaster in the work of organization. The possession therefore of the power of organization by the headmaster, and the fact that he has the power to organize, are not taken by myself and my colleagues as evidence of great superiority on the part of the headmaster. The superiority of the position is undeniable, but not the superiority of the work. I am in favour of the salary of the second assistant being made to more nearly approach that of the first assistant, and the salary of the first assistant being made to more nearly approach that of the headmaster. The assistants do not think it is in the best interests of education that the number of lady teachers should vastly exceed the number of male teachers. They would not like to see the number of lady teachers now employed largely increased and the number of male teachers decreased. In the past the tendency has been to underestimate the importance of the work of the male assistants in the upper classes of our large schools. It is now being recognized by most students of education that the work of male assistants is most important in the framing of the character of our future men and women. Therefore what has existed in the past—namely, the great disparity in the salaries of the headmasters and male assistants—should not be taken as an indication that such should exist at the present time. It can be pointed out, by comparison with salaries paid to assistants in other Government Departments (Engineering, Justice, &c.), that assistant teachers are placed rather unfavourably. We are prepared to meet the argument that these men are highly qualified in their respective branches, but we confidently affirm that their course of study has certainly been no more arduous than has been that of fully qualified teachers. It may be said that these men are specialists, but we claim that teachers of long experience are also such. It takes long experience and very careful study of child-nature before a teacher can successfully analyse the nature and individuality of each pupil, and we hold that unless this is done very little impress is made on the child's character. There is always the danger of driving the children on mechanically and along channels unsuitable to their individual characteristics and mental ability. The moulding of the character is most important in the upper classes of the school. This process is most important to our national prosperity and integrity. It might be stated that 90 per cent. of the public servants come through the hands of the male assistants of the city schools, hence the necessity of having the very best teaching talent in these schools.

2. *Mr. Hogben.*] Supposing you spend the same amount of money in salaries as you spend now, and the general classification depended on the roll number and not on the average attendance, would it make any difference whether you took the average attendance, say, of forty-five or a roll number of fifty, the average attendance being 90 per cent. now?—I have not studied the question. I do not care to answer it.