

were suggested in the interests of the children of having a central school, that would not necessarily mean that the various districts from which the children were drawn would have to be united?—I do not see that it would be necessary. I think that my Board could confer quite well with the Committee of the district in relation to that as well as to other matters, and if it were deemed desirable to do that it could be done.

29. You think it could be done, leaving the school districts as they are?—I do.

30. You give that, at any rate, as your own opinion—that there is no necessity for the union of districts in order to have a central school?—I do not see that there is.

31. Your Board is aware that the power to form urban school districts is one which rests in the hands of the Committees?—Yes.

32. That is not an obligatory thing at all?—That is so; —

33. You think they should not have the power even if they wished?—We think that it would be a retrograde step; that it would prejudicially affect the schools. We know that our Committees are good Committees.

34. You object to the majority of the Committees having power to do that?—The Board does, yes. I may say also that the question of franchise comes in. My Board is satisfied that in the householder it has a man who is keenly interested in the school, and that by widening the franchise you introduce a class of voter who has only an incidental interest in the school.

35. *Mr. Malcolm.*] Do I understand that in spite of what you say in your memorandum, paragraph (g) of section 7, you have no wish to curtail the three months' notice of termination of engagement to which a teacher is at present entitled?—The Board has no objection to that.

36. *Mr. McCallum.*] You say that the present system of election of School Committees is satisfactory. Does your Board work harmoniously with all the Committees?—Very.

37. You have no trouble at all?—We have not had any serious trouble in the ten years since I came here. In relation to interest in the schools, if I may make a remark concerning this year's election of members of the Education Board, I should like to mention that we had yesterday at the count of votes 106 votes cast out of 111 voters—106 recorded votes out of 111 in the City Ward, the ward that would be affected. That is an extraordinary record.

38. It was a keenly contested election?—It was contested; but in previous years I find that we have had from 83 per cent. to 93 per cent. recorded, and always more than the lower figure in the city.

39. I have a grievance against your Board. Under Mr. Lee it refused to allow any Bible-teaching in schools?—I do not think that is quite correct.

40. Is your Board still of the same opinion?—We have not blocked the Nelson system.

41. But you refused to allow it?—We refused to allow Bible-teaching within the recognized school hours. That is the point that was decided.

42. You refused to allow half an hour at the beginning of a day to be given up to Bible-teaching?—No. The Board refused to recognize the first half-hour of the school day as the time when Bible-reading should be given.

43. Within the school hours?—Yes.

44. Quite right, too; but that is not the point?—The Board refused that.

45. *Mr. Malcolm.*] Would it be this: that the Board refused to surrender the first half-hour outside the school hours?—No. Speaking from memory, the Board was asked to reduce the hours and refused.

46. *The Chairman.*] Your Board considers it unwise that there should be centralization of Inspectors?—Yes.

47. Do you think that full provision is made in clause 127 by which the Inspectors would take just as much interest in their districts as they do now?—We do not think so. We have considered it very carefully.

48. Subclause (2) of clause 127 says "there shall be resident in each education district one Senior Inspector and such other Inspectors as the Minister shall direct"; and subclause (3) makes provision for the saving of the existing appointment?—We think it will involve a change undoubtedly. We regard the relationship of the Inspector to the Board as a very delicate and personal matter. That relationship would in a sense come to an end if the Inspector ceased to be a member of the Board staff. The Inspector would come in as an officer of the Department and not as an officer of the Board. The Chief Inspector attends our Board meeting and advises the Board on many matters relating to staffing, school-building, and administration generally.

49. Is there anything in this Bill which would still prevent that being carried out?—If one looks at the general question I think it will be seen that the relation could not remain as it now is. For instance, in one respect the Board would cease to have the right of direction of Inspectors.

50. Surely not?—If the Inspectors are Inspectors of the Department the Board has no right of direction.

51. Well, is there anything in the Bill that would prevent that? Would not the Inspectors be practically handed over to the Board by the central Department?—If that is the case what is the purpose in centralizing?

52. Because would it not then be possible sometimes to change an Inspector from one district to another if considered advisable?—I suppose it would, but in that case we should not have the same continuity of policy or quite the same fullness of knowledge of individual schools or individual teachers continuing from year to year. The Board could not make any allowance in cases where in former inspections it has known absolutely all the circumstances contributing to perhaps a lower average condition in the schools. The reports of the Inspectors would be mere official reports and in writing.