

FRIDAY, 14TH AUGUST, 1914.

HENRY AINSLIE PARKINSON examined. (No. 36.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am secretary of the New Zealand Educational Institute.

2. What position do you occupy otherwise?—I am head teacher of the Newtown School.

3. Will you make your statement to the Committee?—I will begin with the first resolution—namely, the Council of Education. I think the resolution as put down pretty accurately represents the opinions of the teachers. It is a pleasure to us to see the Council in any form, and it was hoped that the Council would have been given the power of carrying on the general administration of education within the country. It was hoped thereby that all the different kinds of schools would be combined under the one guiding authority. However, that has not been provided for, and perhaps it was too much to expect in one instalment, but the Institute is inclined to welcome the Council as suggested, especially seeing that some part of the wishes of the Institute have been agreed to in the way of giving it a certain measure of administrative power in one or two directions, particularly the power of combining secondary-school courses with primary-school courses. The Institute sees the possibility of great benefit from that. As to the constitution of the Council, the Institute offers no comment except to suggest that in line (c) the additional member of the Council appointed by the Minister should be one of the Department's Inspectors. I do not know that the resolution in regard to Inspectors expressly states it, but I am not going outside my brief when I say that the teachers from one end of the Dominion to the other hail with delight the centralization of the inspectorate, and they see from that many advantages in the future. Nothing has been said about it explicitly, but it is understood it is accepted wholly and gratefully. In regard to casual vacancies, the Institute recommends that all casual vacancies be filled by the electing bodies. The reason given by members in supporting the proposal was that, except where a casual vacancy might occur late in the term of office, there was no sufficient reason why the electing bodies should be deprived of its right to its own representation. The reason urged against it was that it was causing unnecessary expense, but it was held that the expense could not in any case be very great, and that the rights of representation should be conserved. Probably both ideas might be met by a compromise by simply putting in a period after which no election should be held. The District Councils are welcomed by the Institute. They consider they will lead to opportunities for doing a good deal in the way of stimulating local interests and meeting local needs in education. As to Education Boards, it is not too much to say that the proposal in the Bill to retain the nine Boards is one of the principal disappointments. The division of the country into small districts has many disadvantages. Of course, the smallest districts will be obliterated, but still it will have the effect of preserving the aspect of parochialism in the service. It will still not be a national service, and will not therefore be subject to a national outlook either from its administrative heads or from the executive officers, the teachers. I am instructed to urge most strongly that the number of Boards should be still further reduced, either to five, as the Education Commission of two years ago recommended, or preferably to four, with the boundaries conterminous with the University districts. That would in all points in the teachers' belief be a better division. It would amount practically to a recasting of the district system. That is quite understood, but the teachers' belief is that the cost would be fully met by the benefits that would be gained by a wider outlook within the limits of the district. As to the franchise, I am requested to represent that in "urban areas" as well as in "urban districts," which are provided for in the Bill, the municipal franchise should be introduced. I know quite well the question that will be put to me on that point, and I am not quite prepared to suggest on my own behalf the answer to it; but it has been felt by members of the Institute for a long time, especially in certain districts, that the Education Boards ought to be more representative of the general body of the people, and therefore the wider franchise should be instituted. It is therefore hoped that in the urban areas at least the municipal franchise will be instituted, and a further extension of the franchise in rural areas as soon as convenient. I mentioned that the teachers welcome the centralization of the inspectorate. They further welcome the increased support that is to be given to school libraries. An old standing grievance among teachers is the fact that they are not treated as other members of the Public Service. Just now the point is the removal expenses of teachers. In every other branch of the Service, when for the benefit of the Service a servant is removed—and it is to be supposed that it is for the benefit of the Service that a servant is removed—then the expenses of his removal should be paid. The teachers ask that they be put on the same footing as other public servants in that respect. Of course, the reply is that teachers are not servants of the Government, but whether they are or not they are servants of the community. It is not their fault they are not servants of the Government, and in any case it is not proper that the teachers should be punished for that. There is the reply also that on account of the very great number of changes in the services of the teachers it would be very expensive. There are two rejoinders to that: one is that that is no reason why the Department should be relieved of it, and another is that by this Bill the number of transfers would be very much reduced. That is one of the great benefits that this Bill will bring about—the reduction in the number of steps in promotion, and therefore a reduction in the number of transfers. It will be an enormous gain to teachers and schools. On those grounds we consider that what the Institute asks is a fair thing. Then, as to the appointments, the teachers are very delighted with the improvement in the system of appointment, but they would like it to go a little further. In the case of appointment, where a number of candidates are of equal merit, the Board is allowed in cases of not more than three candidates between whom they cannot differentiate to hand over the duty to the Committee. We submit that is imposing upon the Committee a duty that they least of all are capable of performing. If the Board assisted by its expert advisers cannot