

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 29TH JULY, 1914.

MR. G. HOGGEN, Inspector-General of Schools, put in a tabular statement showing the proposed and present staffs and salaries of public schools.

EDWARD KER MCGILGAN examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Chief Inspector of Schools in the Auckland Education District.

2. Are you representing the Inspectors or the Board?—Both Mr. Purdie and myself are representing the Auckland Education Board. I am speaking for the Education Board, and I desire to bring before the Committee certain matters connected with the Education Bill. We say, first, that on the Council of Education the Inspectors are not sufficiently represented, that at least one member of the Council should be an agricultural expert, and at least one member should be an expert in technical education. Why we say that the Inspectors are not sufficiently represented is that possibly the Assistant Director of Education will find a place on that Council, and also another officer of the Department, and we do not know whether that officer will be an Inspector of Schools or not. It is quite conceivable that the attitude of an Inspector of Schools who is working amongst the teachers from day to day, with regard to the interpretation of a regulation, may be somewhat different from that of a departmental officer whose attention is confined to a large extent to administration or framing regulations. An Inspector goes from school to school, converses with teachers and learns their difficulties, whereas the departmental officer does not do so and would not be brought constantly in touch with them. If it is contemplated that one other representative of the Department is to be an Inspector actually at work in the schools, then our objection to that proposal in the Bill would be largely withdrawn. The same remarks would apply to one member of the Council being an agricultural expert, and also to one member being an expert in technical education. The masters of the secondary and technical schools have the privilege of electing a member, but the number of teachers in secondary schools considerably outnumbers those in technical schools, so that there is no guarantee that the member elected would be an expert in technical education. The next matter I wish to deal with is the resolution which was passed by the Auckland Education Board. It was as follows: "That, as recommended by the Royal Commission on Education in 1912, the total number of Education Boards in the Dominion should not exceed five, and that the proposal to divide the Auckland Education District into a district of North Auckland and a district of Waikato calls for emphatic protest and strong opposition." I should like to give a few reasons why the division should not take place. First of all, it does not appear to me personally or to the Board that any reason has been given why the Auckland Education District should be divided. If it could be urged that the administration of education was inefficient we should possibly have very little to say. If it could be urged that the standard of efficiency reached by the pupils in the schools did not compare favourably with that reached in other districts our opposition to the proposal would to a very large extent be withdrawn, or, at any rate, very much weakened. We have not learnt that either the standard of efficiency, or the standard of education reached, or the training given to pupils in our primary and other schools compares unfavourably with that obtaining in other districts. Surely a large district is more economically managed than two small ones where it would be necessary to have separate staffs. The whole of the advanced educational thought in New Zealand has been against small watertight compartments in which there has been great difficulty in promoting free trade between teachers. In Auckland free trade has been established amongst 25 per cent. of the teachers of the Dominion. The important matter in determining the boundaries of any district is that the district should be sufficiently large to enable every teacher to have a reasonable chance of promotion within its area. If you are going to do that there must be a sufficient number of large schools within the area of the district. If you cut the Auckland District into two, as proposed, all the schools in Grade VII will be in one of those districts. There will not be one school in Grade VII in the other district. It is hoped that we shall have a Dominion scheme of grading in the future. That has not come yet, but it may come as the years pass. In the meantime local feeling to a large extent will control promotions, or help to do so, and does not that mean that the teacher in the smaller of those two districts may find a good deal of difficulty in getting to the other—i.e., in getting into the larger schools? He will be at a disadvantage as compared with those who have grown up in the other district. The whole of the teachers of the Auckland Education District are opposed to the proposed division of the district. The breaking-up of the Auckland District may have a serious effect upon the grading scheme. We have ten Inspectors in Auckland, and the grading scheme has been in operation for a number of years. Last year we invited all who were dissatisfied with the grading to send in protests, and we received only sixteen protests—i.e., barely 2 per cent. of our teachers were dissatisfied. Moreover, none of the protests were upheld. The reason of this small percentage is that we have a large Board of Inspectors, and I feel that the great confidence that exists in regard to the grading is owing to that fact. A considerable number of teachers in our district are known to all the Inspectors, and the grading of these teachers sets up a standard with which other teachers can be compared, and so we get at a