

11. *Mr. McCallum.*] You are not satisfied to be linked up with Greymouth?—We do not think there is anything in that. It might lessen the expense, although I do not myself think so. I think there would be dissatisfaction, and you would not improve the status of the schools as you might by joining us with Canterbury.

12. Now, do you think the management from Christchurch will give you the same satisfaction for representation that you have got at the present time?—That I do not know. We do not know what representation we are going to have.

13. When you are linked up with Christchurch you will have a quarter of the members?—That is what I say. It will give us a closer intimacy with the various schools as we are, but we would prefer joining with Christchurch for the advantages we would get in the way of better education for the teachers than they would get by remaining with some other Boards.

14. How many pupils have you attending the schools in Westland to-day?—I think about twelve hundred. I believe we are the smallest Board in New Zealand.

15. And in Canterbury there are about twenty-eight thousand pupils under two Boards. and you desire to be linked up with a district with that number of children?—Yes, if any alteration is made.

16. Do you not think you will require some intermediate body between your Committees and the Board in Christchurch?—I do not know. We say we are doing very well if you will leave us alone.

17. You are not going to be left alone—that is hopeless. It is the same with Marlborough. Do you not think you should have some intermediate body—some School Board or office in Hokitika?—And another in Greymouth. You perpetuate the same thing. I do not fear that joining in with a big body will hurt us. I think they will give us justice.

FRIDAY, 31ST JULY, 1914.

WILLIAM MILNE HAMILTON examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a member of the South Canterbury Board and an ex-Chairman. I might say I have been a member of the South Canterbury Education Board for about ten years, and I was Chairman for about three years.

2. Will you state your case to the Committee?—I do not know whether it has come under your notice that we passed a resolution at the last meeting of the Board in Timaru with reference to this matter, and if not I will read it. It reads, "That the proposal to do away with the South Canterbury Education District is calculated to be seriously detrimental to the best interests of education in South Canterbury without any corresponding benefit to the general interests of education; that it will not promote economy in administration; that owing to the wide areas over which the proposed new districts will extend it will be impossible to get representatives on the new Boards with any sufficient local knowledge of the numerous and widely scattered rural school districts and the important schools in Timaru and other towns in the district for enabling them to effect a just and equitable distribution of the benefits of our education system to which all the various localities and schools are justly entitled; that teachers and others in South Canterbury will be put to serious inconvenience, delay, and expense through having to transact education business with Board officials in distant centres, their only means of doing so being by making journeys to these centres or by the manifestly unsatisfactory means of written correspondence; that in regard to all matters frequently arising, the conditions and circumstances whereof can only be adequately presented by deputations, all parts of South Canterbury will be placed at a great disadvantage, as it will be impracticable to send deputations to either Dunedin or Christchurch; that in regard to the County of Waimate in particular, as it is situated in the Canterbury Provincial District, of which Christchurch is the capital, it would be an anomaly and an incongruity to have its educational administration centred in Dunedin; that, moreover, the principle of centering administration in the larger cities is detrimental to the welfare and progress of rural districts, and therefore to the general progress of the Dominion; that this Board claims to have achieved a large measure of success in promoting the general good of its district in educational matters, especially as to efficiency in methods and economy in expenditure, and claims that in no respect will the new proposals as to districts conduce to give any better results." That resolution outlines the grounds on which the Board thinks it would not be wise to interfere with the present system. I think it would be a sound principle for the Government to act upon, that unless a case is clearly made out where some improvement would be gained it would be very unwise to tamper with the existing position of matters. I may point out that the Board I represent has been in existence for a great number of years, and it has adapted itself, and the people have adapted themselves, to the administration which this Board carries out. Throughout the whole time I do not think that any dissatisfaction has been expressed. Everybody in the district seems to have become well accustomed to the methods of the Board, and great satisfaction exists throughout the district with the work of the Board. I might point out that the Board can justly substantiate its claim to have done the very best with the means at its disposal on the question of economy.

3. *Hon. Mr. Allen.*] I do not question that they have been economical?—Well, in that case it seems difficult to understand why the change should be made, unless there is likely to be some gain. The proposal would cause much disorganization by introducing new boundaries, because one part of the district will be cut off and given to Canterbury and another part given to Dunedin. In regard to the proposal to put the County of Waimate into the Otago Education