

Various suggestions for improving the smaller existing education districts by extending their several areas were laid before us by the Boards. While involving encroachment on adjoining districts by taking in counties that were obviously more closely connected with the centres to which they are now attached, in no instance would these proposed changes of area secure the main objects the Commission has kept in view as adequately or conveniently as do the districts delimited by us.

The Education Act of 1914 provides for a Dominion grading or classification of all public-school teachers, which is obviously intended to remove as far as possible the well-known difficulties that now prevent the ready transfer of meritorious teachers from one district to another in accordance with their recognized deserts. The appointment of teachers is still, however, in the hands of the Education Boards, and much weighty evidence submitted to us renders it highly probable that transfers of teachers within single education districts (which Boards are entitled to make with little or no restriction) will for a long time continue to be the main mode of promotion available for teachers. In view of this difficulty we have considered it advisable to attach very considerable weight to the principle that the new education districts should be large enough, and should afford sufficient variety in the grades of schools within their borders, to secure for their teachers prospects of continuous promotion as good as would be offered were the whole Dominion treated as a single education district.

It is evident that a district in which there existed a good ladder of promotion would be attractive to good teachers; such a district, therefore, would in the main secure a better teaching staff than one less favoured, and the children in the schools would gain the benefit of the better teaching thus afforded. In other words, what benefits the teachers confers also a very solid benefit on the pupils for whom the schools really exist.

This ideal of a reasonably complete ladder of promotion it has not, indeed, been possible to realize in every case; but we have striven to approximate to it as closely as possible, and we believe that a great measure of success in this direction will be secured within the districts herein recommended.

We recommend the smallest number of districts allowed by the Act—namely, seven—as follows:—

Auckland.
Wanganui.
Hawke's Bay.
Wellington.
Canterbury.
Otago.
Southland.

The chief town of each district and the counties and other areas included therein are set forth in the schedule hereto. The boundaries of the districts are also shown in the accompanying map.

If this recommendation is adopted by Parliament paragraph (d) of section 8 of the Act will require amendment.

The recommendation involves the incorporation in the larger districts of Westland, Grey, Marlborough, Taranaki, Nelson, and South Canterbury. With regard to the first three of these it is not considered that any explanation is necessary; each of them is too small to warrant retention as one of seven, eight, or nine districts in the Dominion.

South Canterbury, Nelson, and Taranaki are, roughly, equal in school population. Under the Act at least one of them must disappear. In our opinion each of them is too small to afford a reasonable field for the promotion of teachers or to form a satisfactory administrative and economic unit; nor is it possible to add adjacent territory in such a way as to overcome these difficulties without introducing others equally serious.

In particular, as regards South Canterbury, the most feasible suggestion offered was the addition of the County of Waitaki in the south, and of the Counties of Ashburton, Ellesmere, and Selwyn in the north. This would provide a district satisfactory in some respects, but it would ignore the principle of community of interest. It would bring the boundary within twenty miles of Christchurch, and detach from the North Canterbury District a large number of people whose interests are undoubtedly centred in Christchurch. Similarly, the southern extension would