

THURSDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 1879.

Sir George GREY, K.C.B., M.H.R., examined.

469. *The Chairman.*] We desire to examine you with regard to provisions we propose to make in connection with the Endowed School at Wanganui, and to receive any information you may give respecting it. I suppose you have read the Bill?—Yes.

470. Do you agree with the spirit of the Bill that local management should be provided?—Well, I should have to think over that. As I read the Bill it is taking away property absolutely.

471. Do you think it would be taking away property if the letter of the Trust were not changed in any way?—I think it is taking it from one body to whom it was granted absolutely.

472. Do you think the Trust was granted to one denomination for the education of children of one denomination only?—I think that was the intention of the grant; not necessarily that the children should be the children of parents of one denomination only, but for the sake of the denomination giving to the children brought up in the principles of that denomination a certain education.

473. That is to say, that it was given for the education of children of Church of England parents only?—Not of Church of England parents only, but to be brought up in that faith. They might be orphans.

474. They should be educated in the faith of the Church of England?—If the Church thought proper. It was part of a general system. There were similar grants given to the Wesleyans, and similar grants given to the Roman Catholics.

475. Do you not think, reading the Trust deed, that the tone of the schedule implies that it was given for the children of all denominations?—I think not. I think the words are specific, "For the use and towards the maintenance of the said school so long as religious education, industrial training, and instruction in the English language shall be given to the children there." I think it was clear that the Church of England would only give religious instruction in the tenets of that Church.

476. If the terms of the Trust were not properly carried out by the present Trustees, do you think the Trustees should be changed?—Yes; but I think the Courts of the country are always gone to in such a case: the Supreme Court, or the Court of Chancery.

477. Do you think it would be advisable to burden this estate with litigation?—Yes. If you were going to take their property from them, it should be taken before the ordinary tribunals.

478. Do you consider this Trust in the nature of private property?—I consider it property in the hands of a public body. I am not contending that this system is best, but I think, if any alteration is made, it should be made through all similar Trusts. This is a departure from a great principle that was established.

479. Do you think the system of late years, by which education has been secularized, does not make, to a certain extent, these grants obsolete which were given for religious purposes?—Well, that is a large question. I do not think it necessarily makes them obsolete. That is a legal point. I think it is desirable some charitable institutions should exist in which the exertions of religious bodies are called out. It is a very wide question.

480. Do you not think it desirable that local management should be provided if the Trust is not being fulfilled or properly carried out?—I think, if the Trust is not being properly carried out, that should be shown in a Court, and the Court should decide the question. You see the whole of the grants similar to this rest upon a system which has been done away with. The conception at that time was that the provincial system would prevail, and that other islands would be added to New Zealand, which would be provinces in themselves, and that here a great Legislature would sit; that New Zealand would be the centre to which large numbers of children would be sent. At that time many children were sent to New Zealand from islands in the Pacific, and some religious bodies were imparting a higher order of education to children from the same islands. For instance, the Wesleyans established a college at Auckland, and the children of missionaries from other islands were sent to that college, and received a very high education. The idea was that New Zealand was to be the centre of the Pacific. I have known at least one hundred and fifty children of Natives of the islands at different schools in New Zealand.

481. One of the objects of the Trust was to educate children of the Native race?—Yes; the children of any poor and destitute persons of any race.

482. But particularly the Native race of this colony and islands of the Pacific?—Not particularly; but it was intended for all the Queen's subjects of all races, and in addition for the children of any islands in the Pacific who may be the subjects of native chiefs.

483. I suppose you have no knowledge as to how the school is being conducted?—No; that has passed out of my knowledge.

484. If no Native children and no poor children were being educated there, would you consider the Trust is being fulfilled?—If none were educated there, I should not think so; but I am not the judge of that; but the Legislature might choose to abolish this system altogether. It might say the present system is not suited to the present circumstances of the colony, and that all these Trusts, Wesleyan, Church of England, and Roman Catholic, are to be taken away and devoted to a different object. I quite understand that, and I think they might have reasons to recommend it; but whether they would be counterbalanced by other reasons I cannot say without long thought. I have always been of opinion that there must be charitable institutions in the colony to take care of orphans and those left unprovided for; and I believe they are fully taken care of by religious bodies.

485. Suppose the Trust is not now being fulfilled, do you not think it would be better to have a change, than to have the grant dissipated in the Courts of law?—I do not say it would be dissipated, if there was a great charity being taken away and put to different purposes. These charitable Trusts are scattered about the colony in different places. I can understand the Legislature coming in when it is alleged that there has been mismanagement, and that the Trust has not been carried out, and that upon a broad ground the present system is not suited to the circumstances of the colony. The circumstances may be changed; but I do not understand one Trust being singled out, unless some fair trial is allowed.