

strengthening and consolidating the present system of education. At the same time I have no objection personally against grants-in-aid being made to those denominations who cannot conscientiously send their children to the present schools; always provided that their schools are under Government inspection, and that the payment is according to actual ascertained results.

447. The statistics say the Catholics number one-seventh of the population. Do you think it would be wise and just that they should have a fair proportion of the grant for education given them for the support of their schools?—I could not single out any particular religious communion, but I am prepared to say that, in my own judgment, I see no objection against any religious body that through conscientious objections could not send their children to the present schools receiving payment from the State for secular education imparted by them under Government inspection, according to ascertained results.

448. Do you consider that any relief should be given the Catholics on the grievance they allege they suffer?—Personally I think so, on the ground that any grant-in-aid made to them or to anybody else for the secular results produced in their schools is not money granted to build up a religious system. The State takes no cognizance whatever of the religion or irreligion taught in the schools; but this money is paid on account of secular educational results produced; and if these results are satisfactory to the Inspectors appointed by the Government, and in every other respect their schools come up to the standard prescribed, then I fail to see that there is any wrong done in that, or that the grant in any sense can be said to be a grant to that particular denomination. It is on account of secular results produced only.

449. What alteration of the present Act would you suggest to remove the grievance of the Catholics without inflicting injustice on other denominations?—I am not prepared to answer that question except so far as the statement I made just now is an answer. I am prepared to say what alterations in the Act I should personally like to see.

450. Have your denomination made any claim to the Government for anything for denominational schools?—Not since the Act of 1877 has been in force.

451. Then, your body does not object to the present system?—We have not taken any action as a body, although, in my own judgment, such action is looming. I do not think it will be long before there will be action in favour of Bible-reading in schools, but not beyond that.

452. In your visits to the State schools, do you find that the children of other denominations besides yours are backward in their knowledge of Scripture?—I have no means of ascertaining, inasmuch as the course prescribed under the present Act is entirely secular. If you mean, Do I consider that under the operations of the present Act there is any considerable amount of religious ignorance in consequence? I am prepared to say I believe there is.

453. Do you think secular education tends very much to infidelity?—No, not very much. I am not prepared to say it does. At the same time I believe the outcome of the present Act is to withhold the knowledge of God and the Bible from a number of children—I will not say a considerable number—who neither get this knowledge from the Sunday-school nor in their homes. They do not, therefore, get it at all. I have ascertained that as a fact. And I believe there is a considerable increase of “larrikinism” and crime as the outcome of it.

454. *Hon. Dr. Grace.*] Will you state what you mean exactly in saying you believe the withholding of the Bible from schools is imperilling the present system?—I mean there is a growing amount of dissatisfaction with the present Act in consequence of the exclusion of the Bible, and thus it is alienating many of those who had been supporters of it. Generally speaking, we went in heartily as a body for the present national system, and consented to give up our day-schools for it—we had some important schools in Canterbury, for instance—on the understanding, I believe, that the repetition of the Lord's Prayer and Bible-reading was then contemplated under the national system. But, in consequence of the Act being entirely secular, I am bound to say that, in my own judgment, a good many of our own people, and a good many of the public generally, are becoming dissatisfied with the Act. And I think that any provision in the Act which occasions any large or growing amount of complaint is imperilling the system.

455. Were the schools your body had before 1877 efficient and satisfactory?—I believe they were, both to our body and to the Government Inspectors.

456. Were you in the habit of receiving State aid?—Yes.

457. To what extent?—It was under the provincial system. I do not remember the exact amount. In Canterbury, for instance, it was the amount prescribed under the Education Ordinance of the province.

458. It was of material assistance?—Yes.

459. Did you supplement that amount by the voluntary system?—We did.

460. To what extent do you suppose your voluntary contributions went on a capitation basis. Was it a heavy tax?—No; it was chiefly in the shape of school fees, which, together with the capitation allowance, almost supported the schools. I was Acting-Chairman of the School Committee in Kaiapoi for a year, and, as far as I can remember, the only actual cost upon us outside the fees was the cost of erecting and maintaining the buildings.

461. What were the school fees?—I am not able to say precisely. They ranged from 4d. to 8d. or 9d. a week. I know we had a graduated scale in the case of families. If there were several children in a family, there was a proportionately smaller fee.

462. Did you find that the parents complained of the cost to them of that system?—I do not remember that we were troubled with any serious complaints. I know there was trouble in collecting the fees. On the whole I consider it was an objectionable system having the fees.

463. On account of the difficulty of administration?—Yes.

464. What alterations in the present Act would you personally like to see?—In the interest of the Act itself, for I heartily believe in a national system of education, and I long to see the present system strengthened and made more effective—in the interest of that I simply propose, in the first place, that the schools should be opened by reciting the Lord's Prayer; secondly, that the