

749. Do you think the present state of the Catholic schools has not been brought about in a great measure by the rivalry of the State schools?—There is an element of our success in that, for which reason I court State inspection of the Catholic schools, because inspection and competition are always good; but it does not follow that rivalry is the only cause of success.

750. What I want to get at is this: when there was no rivalry on the part of the State the thing went all wrong; and, if the prayer of the present petition and the request that the Catholics make were granted, I think I see that the State system of education must fall to pieces?—The present system must, but not the State education as advocated in the denominational system.

751. But State education means paying the teachers, and, judging from the past, we should then have the same old story over again, because the competition will have been withdrawn, and you will have it all to yourselves?—No; the competition will exist in a most healthy form. There would be just the same competition as there is now; the amount of money to be derived will always depend on the efficiency of the school.

*Mr. Swanson*: That was exactly the state of affairs before, and I will tell you some things that happened then.

*Hon. Mr. P. A. Buckley*: I object to this. We are here for the purpose of asking questions, not for the purpose of making speeches.

*Hon. the Chairman*: I think some of the remarks are irrelevant; but Mr. Swanson is quite at liberty to proceed with questions.

*Mr. Swanson*: I decline to continue.

753. *Mr. Turnbull.*] You say there are 1,340 children attending your schools in Auckland?—Yes.

754. And what is the annual maintenance?—£2,400. This, however, is only an approximate figure.

755. In that sum do you include the services rendered by the Sisters of Mercy?—Yes.

756. You are fully prepared to admit that the State should have the right to fix the standard of secular education?—Yes.

757. You do not wish that standard diminished in any way?—No; I have a private opinion of my own, though, that children are being educated on an unnecessarily high standard. We want servant-maids to scrub the floors, not to play the piano.

758. But you are quite willing to come up to the standard that now exists in the country?—Yes.

759. You wish active inspection by the Government?—Yes.

760. And that would be the remedy for any evil which has been stated to exist hitherto, because that inspection did not then take place?—Yes; I look upon inspection as a healthy element in the success of a school.

761. *Mr. Dodson.*] Would it not satisfy the people whom you represent if the State paid for all the secular knowledge imparted in your schools?—We should be quite content with that. The imparting of religious knowledge, you may say, costs very little.

762. And that would satisfy the petitioners?—Yes; we go in for nothing short of justice. There is no reason why we should not. Why should we agree to be treated unfairly? We only wish to be on the same footing as others.

763. But you are on the same footing?—No; we do not get any help at all. If we did we should be quite satisfied.

764. *Hon. Mr. Barnicoat.*] If your schools were subsidized by the State at the same rate as the other schools, would you consider the admission fees belonged to them?—Yes.

765. Do you seek total separation from the other children?—The Catholic Church is rather an exclusive body, and, as our religious views differ *toto caelo* from those of others, our religious education differs from that of other Christian bodies. Hence we always like to have our schools to ourselves. There is no other way of managing it. You cannot make separations, and say to one half the class, "This is meant for you," or, "This is not." We are members of one family, and we like our children to be educated together.

766. Would it be possible to separate religious instruction from secular, so as to give religious instruction at a prearranged hour? Those parents who wished it could cause their children to be withdrawn at such times?—That is certainly partially possible, and is the system carried out in England. There are certain hours allotted for religious instruction, beyond which it is illegal to impart such instruction. But religion gives a colouring to every branch of instruction. If you take history, for example, how can you expect a teacher belonging to the Church of England to refrain from giving his own colouring to the history of the Reformation, which would harmonize with the views in which he has been brought up? He may do so quite honestly, without any idea that he is inflicting injustice, and yet the truth is that it would be an injustice to the Catholic people.

767. Then, you do not believe it possible?—I am afraid not.

768. I wish to find out how far the Nelson system of education is possible—but the Catholic bodies do not avail themselves of it?—Our religious education is much more precise and particular than that of any other religious body. The consequence is that in all Catholic schools we can admit Protestants very well, but there is a great deficiency in the religious instruction when our children go to a Protestant school.

769. Would the body that you represent be satisfied with a subsidy such as is receivable by Act—the Education Act—without the Government also assisting in the erection of school buildings?—As a first instalment of justice we would be very pleased to do so; but there is no reason why we should say that we are willing to undergo injustice. Why should we be treated differently to all other denominations?

770. The chief reason is this: the Government would willingly vote money for the erection of schools on their own land, but not on the land of others?—In a case of that sort I dare say we should be very willing to take what we can get. Compensation for the past we do not look for. We expect, however, that as regards the future we shall be all on a footing of equality.