

The committee are well aware that, though the raising of the fees for students from £45 to £65 per annum was really compulsory, because the annual receipts were less than the expenditure, the number of students has at once declined from about thirty-six to twenty. I have good reason, through my correspondence, to know that our numbers would have kept up under the old rate, and I believe under the present rate our numbers will not probably increase, the more especially that agriculture is in a very depressed condition.

I would, too, call the committee's attention to the fact that of our students, under both rates of fees, perhaps two or three per cent. only have been sons of *bona fide* farmers, unless graziers on a large scale could be so classed. I believe the institution was formed for the benefit of farmers' sons; and if the question ever be publicly asked, To what extent has this class been benefited? I fear the good work that has been done will be lost sight of to a great extent, and the fact that we have about twenty students in a building that will accommodate fifty, and that but one, perhaps, of the twenty is the son of a farmer, would be pushed into a very prominent position.

My visit to Victoria had the effect of directing my attention more closely to this question of agricultural education. I may say I was very highly complimented upon the evidence given by me before the Royal Commission in Melbourne; but much of the advice I was enabled to give—viz., that portion relating to the treatment, &c., of colonial students—was the result of my experience here, and I deem it my duty to you and myself to point out where my recommendations to the Victorian Commission were not based upon the conditions obtaining here. My doing so would really serve to show what I believe to be the weak points in this institution if considered as the centre of agricultural education in New Zealand, a position which it undoubtedly should hold.

1. With respect to securing farmers' sons as students, I pointed out that a lad of fifteen or sixteen years of age is worth to his father, a farmer, 10s. a week at least. If the father be required, in order to send the boy to an agricultural college, to not only forego the boy's services, but also to pay £50 to £65 per annum for his education, he is not likely to do so. Most ordinary farmers in the colonies could not afford it, and higher education fails to reach the class it is most desirable that it should affect. I expressed my opinion that lowering the amount of fees would be practically useless to the desired end, and that the remedy is to class agricultural colleges as technical schools, to which should be drafted from the State schools of the colony—possibly excluding town schools—a certain number of youths intending to become farmers. Provision should be made by the Government for a certain number of scholarships to be competed for by State-school boys. Scholarships are already provided by the Victorian Government to enable boys to enter technical schools, and I was told by the Secretary to the Educational Department that the Victorian Agricultural College could be treated as a technical school. In this colony I believe such schools are to be established, and, if so, I think this institution should claim a certain proportion of any scholarships that may be provided. I think at least one-half of our students should be such scholars, as I look upon this as the only means of securing the material that we should work with in order to secure higher education to the agricultural community.

2. I think there is little doubt but that the Government will be pressed into establishing agricultural schools in Auckland and Otago, if not elsewhere also. Our practice is not that of the Auckland Provincial District, and such points will be agitated whenever the question of agricultural education comes to the front. In Victoria it is proposed to establish several farm schools, or special agricultural stations, affiliated to a central college, because climatic and other influences necessarily cause great diversity in the practice and in the kinds of crops grown in different parts of the colony. The scientific teaching is the same for all branches of agriculture, and it would be waste of strength and money to teach the sciences, &c., at several places, whilst we have here at Lincoln, centrally situated, the teachers, the accommodation, and all the appliances.

Could not it be arranged that we do the scientific and other teaching for the whole colony, students being drafted north or south to the special stations for special work under an expert? The saving the Government would effect in avoiding the establishment of separate science schools by making use of the means at hand at Lincoln for scientific and other teaching, would recoup it for the expense of the suggested scholarships.

3. I recommended the Victorian Council to add a school of forestry to their college, as the scientific teaching would be almost identical with that required in teaching the other branches of agriculture, and the cost of any special teaching would be exceedingly small when compared with that of establishing a separate school of forestry. It appears to me that the Government is likely to take steps in this direction; but if two local forest-stations were established, and this institution made the source of the scientific portion of the teaching, there would be a great saving, and the advantages to this institution would be great.

We are suffering now greatly from the want of a natural-science lecturer—in fact, we are not doing thorough work without such teacher. Such an addition to our staff would comprise almost all the additional strength that would be necessary, make this College the central forest school, and the saving the Government would effect in not establishing a separate scientific school should warrant their providing for such an officer.

4. We are doing no special experimental work, through want of funds. I fear this fact may be used against the school some day by its enemies. Something is being done by Mr. Mackay, on the part of the Government, in supplying grasses, but much more should be done in this direction and many others. It must be evident to members of the committee that I think it advisable some change should be made in order that the most should be made of the School of Agriculture. Should the whole question of agricultural education ever be brought before Parliament, the following points in connection with the School of Agriculture will, I think, be brought prominently forward: viz., (a) The value of the endowment; (b) expenditure on buildings, &c.; (c) accommodation afforded for students, &c.; (d) present number of students; (e) cost of each to the State; (f) parentage of students; (g) experimental work.