

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE COST OF SCHOOL-BOOKS

(REPLIES TO CIRCULAR SENT TO EDUCATION BOARDS RESPECTING).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 24th June, 1890.

I have the honour, by direction of the Minister of Education, to inform you that it has been represented to him that the parents of the children that attend the public schools are commonly required to purchase a large number of school-books, and that the payment thus required of them in many cases amounts to the equivalent of a substantial fee, so that the promise of free education is practically unfulfilled.

After making inquiry, the Minister considers that there is ground for the complaint, and he believes that excessive requirements have arisen partly from the wide option afforded in the list of books set forth in the regulation made by Order in Council, and partly from the frequency of changes made or allowed by the Boards with respect to the selecting of books from the list.

He is also of opinion that such books as are required to be used only in class, and need not be taken home, might reasonably be provided as part of the apparatus of the school. Books used in this way would last for years in a school under good discipline.

The Minister would be glad to assist in bringing about a state of things in which a child removed from one school to another would not require a new set of books, and in which a book, after an elder child had done with it, could be passed on to a younger member of the same family. He therefore has it in contemplation to propose a revision of the regulation, in order that the number of authorised books may be considerably diminished. But before taking any decisive action in this direction he is desirous of ascertaining the views of the several Education Boards on the whole question to which this letter relates. I am, therefore, to ask you to be so good as to favour him at some early date with an expression of your opinion on the subject.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, _____

WM. JAS. HABENS.

ABSTRACT OF THE REPLIES OF EDUCATION BOARDS TO CIRCULAR OF 24TH JUNE, 1890.

AUCKLAND.

THE Board is of opinion that too great a variety of choice is allowed in the list of books prescribed by Order in Council, and that the number of authorised books can, with advantage, be considerably reduced as proposed by the Minister. Very few text-books need be used by the scholars; and a multiplicity of books indicates a want of teaching-power. On the other hand, the Board sees no advantage to be gained by the proposal to provide as part of the apparatus of a school such books as are required to be used only in class. Very few books are used only during school-hours, and the proposal would, therefore, be practically inoperative in this district.

With regard to reading-books, there can be no ground for complaint here. The same Readers are used in all schools throughout the Auckland Education District, and the Board has for some time past resisted any attempt to introduce a change.

TARANAKI.

The Board is of opinion that no change is required in the present system by which the parents provide school-books; that any system by which the Board or Committee would provide part of the books would be costly and practically unworkable. In this education district the school-books are practically uniform and interchangeable in the schools, and the Board is of opinion that the school-books throughout the colony should, as soon as possible, be made uniform, when differences of opinions among Boards can be reconciled.

WANGANUI.

Drawing- and copy-books are the only ones that do not require to be taken home by children. Books are passed from one child to another, and a child removed from one school can use the same books at any other school in this district.