

## APPENDIX.

## ADDRESS OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

ON being introduced by the Chairman, the Minister of Education welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Government. In having the three interests represented, the Government and the country would benefit in the decisions of the Conference. He trusted that the most important subjects pertaining to the education system would be fully debated, and receive careful consideration, so that he should receive advice which should help him in his work in the future; for, after all, his was the lay mind, to be instructed by practical and expert minds in this matter. The Act had stood almost untouched since the day it was passed (1877). We of to-day should pay a tribute to the men who framed it. The Hon. Mr. Bowen, the Minister of the day when the measure went through, was still with us, but the system and education generally had lost a sound and staunch friend when the Rev. Mr. Habens passed away. The speaker paid a high tribute to the ability of Mr. Habens, who, he said, gave up his life to conscientiously carry out the system. The Minister then went on to say that the reason why the Act had stayed so long untouched was, of course, a tribute to its excellence as a whole, and of its carrying out perfectly the wishes and desires of the people of the colony, but still it was only natural that, after so many years' experience, there might be some parts of the system that required alteration. He did not think that the Conference would be doing more than its duty to the people it represented if it should take up the system and see how far, by the light of experience, it was carrying out its work, and on what points amendments might be required. He felt, at all events, that he was addressing a Conference of experts, who, probably, were more familiar with many practical difficulties of the present system than he could be as Minister. There was one point beyond all praise, and he would be sorry to see it disturbed, and that was that so much administrative power was left to the Boards. That, he believed, was the secret of the success of the system; it was a system worked for the people by the people, but, at the same time, it had served to cover a good deal of imperfect machinery—imperfect machinery that would not have done its work so well but for the good sense of the people behind the Act. There had been a great deal of dissatisfaction as to the present machinery for the election of Boards. That was a matter, he trusted, the Conference would give its attention to, and he should be very pleased to consider any suggestions it made, as he had long been of opinion that the election of Boards should be placed on a more satisfactory footing. He did not believe that bodies elected to do one thing should have the power to elect some one else to do another. Therefore, he had already, for two sessions, moved in the direction of giving each committeeman an individual vote, believing that the results would be more satisfactory, and the real minds of members of school committees given effect to. He asked that they would consider the matter, and, if they thought it desirable that there should be amendments to the machinery, give expression to their views. There was another question which was in the minds of many people—a matter of great importance—and he thought the time was ripe for bringing about a change. He referred to the question of freedom of classification. This was a matter that should receive great attention from the Conference, and enable him, as Minister, to really know what the united minds of the educational authorities were on this subject, because they must be aware that, whatever his individual opinions might be on this subject, he would not think it right to take the responsibility of forcing even this important change on the Boards and educational authorities, even though he felt strongly on the matter. He would like to feel that he was carrying with him the minds of those who had to administer the Act, and also those who were responsible for teaching. He did not think it was necessary to go into the *pros* and *cons* of the question; perhaps an opportunity for that might be offered after they had discussed it. He presumed that they were perfectly aware of what freedom of classification meant, and what it would do for them if brought about. They had the advantage of the experience of the Mother-country in this matter, and although, possibly, it might be said that when the colonial Act was passed in 1877 the experience of the Mother-country as to primary public schools was not of very much value, still, to-day matters at Home had altered very much, and they could now, he thought, look to the experience of the past few years of England. Connected with freedom of classification there were several other subjects of very great importance. In all districts, but especially in small districts, it would free Inspectors from the drudgery of the present inspections, and, if they were set free, they would have time at their disposal to devote to helping teachers where help was most required. They would go into the schools, not for the purpose of finding fault or drawing attention to the deficiencies of the teaching, but with the intention of helping young teachers, and raising them by showing them how to do things in a friendly and kindly manner. He could see a great deal of benefit for the smaller districts by the establishment of such a change as freedom of classification. There were other subjects which he approached with a different state of mind. These were subjects which must be looked upon with a great deal of caution, because they struck deeply at the system. He referred to the demands that had been pretty general in certain quarters for a colonial inspectorate and a colonial scale of salaries. There was a great deal to be said for both. Finance was, of course, the backbone of every administrative system, and the finance of the small districts was not strong enough to enable the local authorities to administer the Act as they would like to. If a colonial scale of salaries was adopted, the difference between districts that now existed would disappear, and they would be assured of a teaching-staff equally good, equally strong, and equally powerful for good in every district in the colony, instead of having various standards of excellence. It would not only operate in the direction of improving the system generally, but they would have a profession more highly considered by the public, and of more undoubted excellence, in whatever part of the colony it was. They must admit that the standard of excellence was not so high in some as in other parts, and this was a matter for regret. But we must not forget that this proposal, which would strike at the financial root of the present system, would, therefore, to a certain extent, take away from the Boards that power of individual finance which they now possessed, and the enjoyment of which had led to a great deal of the self-reliance of their past administration. The question of a colonial inspectorate was another possible amendment, which, from many points of view, should improve and strengthen the system generally. He did not so much refer to the quality of the present inspection; the quality was undoubted, but would it not be better for the Inspectors, as a body, and for those whom they inspected, that they should be under departmental control, and be more frequently removed from place to place? He believed that every officer in the position of Inspector would be very much better for a change from district to district, and he was quite sure, from the point of view of those they inspected, that this must operate very much to their benefit. This, however, again involved the question of the individual administration of the Boards, a subject that could only be approached with a considerable amount of diffidence. He would leave them to discuss these questions, and make whatever suggestions they might think proper. He could only hope that this Conference, the first, he believed, at which the three powers that governed their educational world had been brought together, would be productive of good, and that it certainly would not be the last. [*New Zealand Times.*]

## PLAN OF A COLONIAL SCALE.

"AVERAGE attendance" means "working average." Where "one for every hundred" or "one for every fifty" occurs it is to be understood that a remainder after division by 100 or by 50, as the case may be, is to count for 100 or for 50, as the case may be.

Schools shall be classified according to attendance, as follows; Class I., exceeding 700; Class II., 401 to 700; Class III., 251 to 400; Class IV., 151 to 250; Class V., 36 to 150; Class VI., not exceeding 35.

"Teacher" includes principal teacher, sole teacher, assistant teacher, junior teacher, and pupil-teacher.

In a school above Class VI. one teacher at least must be of one sex and one teacher at least must be of the other; and, with this exception, this plan does not recognise any distinction between the sexes. In a school of Class VI. there shall be a sole teacher, and if the sole teacher is a man he shall pay a sewing-mistress.

In Class V. the staff shall be—(c), 36 to 75, principal and one assistant; (b), 76 to 115, principal, assistant, and pupil-teacher; (a), 116 to 150, principal, assistant, and two pupil-teachers.

Above Class V. there shall be in every school, besides the principal, one teacher for every fifty pupils; and among the teachers there shall be one pupil-teacher for every hundred pupils. In Class I. there shall be four