

STEAD ELLIS, Secretary to the Nelson Education Board, examined.

251. *Mr. Davidson.*] Is your scale of staff strictly adhered to in the Nelson District?—In the smaller schools it is; but in the larger schools the attendance fluctuates considerably, and the Inspectors advise as to whether appointments should be made or not.

252. Your scale of salaries is not strictly adhered to in the case of certain individual teachers?—There are a few exceptions, including Stoke and the Richmond Boys' School.

*Mr. Harkness:* It was made a provision when the scale was introduced that it should not be retrospective.

254. *Mr. Davidson.*] The headmaster of the Richmond Boys' School is paid £200 instead of the scale rate of £140: has the Board considered the desirableness of transferring him to a position where he would receive a salary equal to about £200?—No, that question has never come before the Board. In fact, there are few places in this district where a teacher could get it.

255. *Mr. Stewart.*] Do you not think there would be an advantage in combining schools?—I have always thought that the schools are, as a rule, too close to each other.

256. As to clause 3 of the recommendations of the Nelson Educational Institute [clause read], are you aware that the working-average of the schools throws out any day on which the attendance is less than one-half of the number on the roll?—Yes.

257. Is that a sufficient safeguard in special circumstances of this kind?—Generally, I think it is. In one case the March returns showed that the attendance of the school had never reached one-half.

258. *Mr. Hill.*] I see that your scale goes up to only £169?—Yes.

259. The Westport District High School is shown with an average of 465. Your scale shows Westport Boys' and Westport Girls': are they carried on separately, or have these departments been since merged?—There is only one school there now.

260. As to the central schools of Nelson, has the headmaster of the Boys' School any control over the headmistress of the Girls'?—No; she is quite independent of him.

261. What is her salary?—£175.

262. Do you not think that if these two schools were merged they could be carried on at less expense?—I do not think the Board would reduce any salaries.

263. Do you think £5 a head sufficient for all schools with an attendance of 20: would that improve their condition?—It would improve the condition of the teachers.

264. *Mr. Gilfedder.*] Do you consider your scale of staffing sufficient?—It has always been considered sufficient.

265. Do you not think our proposed scale is more liberal as to staffs and salaries?—Yes.

266. Do you not think 25 per cent. difference between salaries of male and female teachers too great?—No. The male teachers are generally heads of families, whereas the females are generally single women.

267. If the salaries were equal your Board would probably employ more males?—Yes.

268. Is it not a fact that the cost of living is higher in one part of the district than in another part?—Yes.

269. Are there Committees in connection with these small aided schools?—Yes.

270. Do you think it would be an advantage if the Inspectors of other districts were to take up the work in your district occasionally?—It would tend to uniformity; but I do not know whether it would be an advantage.

271. You are aware that the Inspectors, at their conference, carried a resolution in favour of centralisation?—Yes.

272. You experience a difficulty in getting trained teachers owing to the great distance from a training centre?—We consider the training in our own schools sufficient.

273. You send all names of applicants to the Committees?—Yes, generally.

274. Do you not think that when teachers are paid according to grades of attendances, and a school has, say, 39, the teacher will make strenuous efforts to obtain 40, if that will give him a substantial increase—possibly by altering the register?—Well, I hope not.

275. Well, possibly there is a propensity in that direction?—I do not know.

276. Have there been any exchanges of teachers by your Board?—Yes, one or two.

277. Has the Committee been consulted?—Yes; both Committees.

277A. You do not adopt the system of promoting teachers?—No; we do not know that we have the power.

278. Under your scale a teacher and a pupil-teacher are employed when the attendance is from 37 to 65; therefore the same staff is required for 38 or 40 as for 65?—That is so. There must be some number where the staff is to be increased.

279. *Mr. Smith.*] Do you think the Board would have any difficulty in the amalgamation of schools such as Brightwater and River Terrace?—Yes, they would.

280. Was there much difficulty in getting the Brightwater Girls' School closed?—No, because there was another school erected alongside of it. The school closed has been empty ever since.

281. Has any attempt been made to group the schools?—Yes. The Brightwater School was built with the idea of being a central school, but the River Terrace people objected.

282. *Mr. Hogben.*] Can you state what your expenditure has been for the last three years under the heads of "teachers' salaries and allowances," "manual and technical instruction," "house allowances," and "general expenses," exclusive of scholarships, buildings, &c.?—I can get it out of the balance-sheet, and will hand it to you.

283. You say there are some cases in which the rule as to not including days on which the attendance is less than half the roll-number in the calculation of returns is not sufficiently generous: do you think any danger would be involved in raising the proportion from one-half to two-thirds?—