

are a very adaptable class. They are prepared at any time, as far as I have seen, to take advantage of any suggestion made by anybody; but it is very difficult to get meetings of them, and therefore you must go to the farmers, and you must get them to have confidence in the lecturer. To summarise the whole thing, I would suggest, first of all, that—but I do not know that I am justified in suggesting this, in relation to the Council of Education. It is rather outside the subject on which I am giving evidence.

10. *The Chairman.*] You have already spoken about it, and may as well continue?—When speaking to the Premier on the subject we brought before him the suggestion as to a Council of Education, and he very properly said that he was being advised very largely by this Committee. But I do not think this Committee can ever occupy the position of a Council of Education, valuable as your work is, and must be. It can never take the position of a Council of Education. It would have no continuous policy, so far as I can see, and you are only intermittent—you only meet during the session—some four or five months of the year. There is that disadvantage. You want a body which has regular meetings and is a continuous body. So I make the suggestion that the time has arrived when a Council of Education should be set up. Then, our most important point, as far as the country is concerned, is that rural education should be given by means of peripatetic teachers—and I have suggested that we have in the colony men who could be prepared, I believe, to the great advantage of the different schools and teachers—to go about among the schools and impart rural education. Then, I think we ought to have further instruction of female teachers in domestic economy and nursing. That, I believe, is being done in some instances, but I think it ought to be done systematically. If you will allow me to go back to the suggestion as to a Council of Education, I would like to point out that this is the position of New Zealand: We have some good Boards of Education and some indifferent Boards. The good Boards are, no doubt, doing good work, but we are not level in education. We have no system of levelling up; we have no system of seeing that the level of education is the same all over New Zealand, and it is very important that we should have. It can never be so under the present conditions, as far as I can see. Where you have a thick population in the rural districts, continuation classes—and I am glad to see that Mr. Seddon alluded to continuation classes in his appropriation speech of last year, but he did not do anything—might be gone on with, and something done in the direction taken by Mr. Wallace in Victoria. It must be begun in a small way, and you must try to get the farmers together in that way. Then comes nature-study. I have not said anything specially about nature-study, because, of course, everybody accepts the fact that it ought to be taught in our schools. I have a great number of books here in relation to nature-study—a very valuable book by a man called Hodge, published in England, and a great number of other books. There is “Nature in New Zealand”—a very valuable and interesting little work of Captain Hutton’s. [Books produced.] This is another nature-study book, published in Boston, and written by Captain Charles William Burkett, professor of agriculture, and two other gentlemen. [Produced.] It is a highly instructive book, well got up, and full of photographs. There is a great deal of literature on this subject. Mr. Gillies has written a book on nature-studies in Australia. Although these works, of course, are interesting, a proper text-book on nature-study would be most valuable in New Zealand, and I think we ought to have a better one than we have got. I think, too, that nature-study ought to be taught in all schools, because the love of nature is inherent in a child, and if you do not encourage and cultivate that, the love will, at any rate, be deadened. In my opinion, nature-study ought to be very carefully encouraged in the large city schools, in order to make the children desire to get into the country. I think, too, that we do not take sufficient pains in taking children out for walks. It is a very irksome thing, because the children have so many questions to ask; but at the same time it is a very necessary thing. I do not mean to say that we ourselves ought to do it; it ought to be part of the teachers’ duties to take the children out and explain things. I thank you very much, gentlemen, for listening so patiently to what I have had to say; but the matter is a very big one, and the Farmers’ Union looks upon it as a very vital one for the future of New Zealand. We want to encourage rural education, believing that it will be of immense importance to the future of this colony.

11. Have you any other suggestions to make?—No; but I shall be pleased to answer any questions.

12. *Mr. J. Allen.*] With regard to your suggestion, Mr. Wilson, as to a Council of Education, do I understand that the Council would be a central body?—I have not thought about that. I have only suggested that we should have a Council of Education. The University Senate is the same class of body, and it does not always meet in the same place. The Council would be for the whole of New Zealand, and therefore it would probably be much better if it moved about—both for the education of the Council itself and for the benefit of the people.

13. I presume you do not wish to compare this Council with the University Senate, which is only an examining body?—No. I am speaking more of the class of men composing it.

14. Are you aware of what has happened in America with regard to these Councils of Education?—No.

15. You are not aware whether they are local or not?—I have no information on that subject.

16. You said that every child ought to be taught with special reference to its surroundings?—Yes.

17. You do not mean by that with regard to its future life?—I do partially. In the country I want to teach the children something which will encourage them to remain in the country and to take up country life. It is preferable to going into the town to become a clerk or to take up other town work, and that is what I speak of, having regard to their future. In the same way I think that the children in mining districts ought to be specially taught in relation to the subject of mining. The subject ought to be specialised in that way.