

ciples connected with agriculture taught in the primary schools, leaving the specialisation to a later period?—I do not want to specialise and try to teach a child farming. I do not want you for a moment to understand that I suppose that agriculture can be taught at the primary schools, because it cannot be taught there. It is a thing which requires a long time to learn. I only want to take certain subjects and use them, as it were, from an educational point of view, to turn the child's thoughts into the channel in which it will afterwards have to be taught further. Between the ages of five and seven and eight, and so on, a child's mind is extraordinarily adaptable, and if you can only turn it in the direction that you want to turn it it will then perhaps go in the same direction itself; but if you allow the child's mind to diffuse itself it will have no direction at all—my experience of children is that diffuse knowledge is of very little avail. If you try to direct it into the channel in which it will have to go by-and-by I think that will have a great effect possibly on its future life.

92. Have you formed any idea of the increased cost that would be incurred if what you have in your mind were carried out in New Zealand?—Take the Wellington Province, and suppose that you selected a man like Mr. Davis. I have no knowledge of him myself; I am speaking of him from the results he has obtained. Supposing that you gave Mr. Davis an opportunity of going round to the schools and trying to instil into the teachers some spirit and enthusiasm towards teaching nature-study in the rural schools: you could do that, and pay all expenses for a comparatively small sum. I should think you could do it for £700 or £800 a year. You would need to multiply some such sum as that by the number of districts, and I think you would get something for the cost. I do not know the actual salaries that these people get.

93. *Mr. Fowlds.*] Mr. Buchanan has asked some questions on a point that I would like to have a little further elucidated—that is, the question whether your suggestions could be carried out without altering the syllabus. The taking of the children out for a walk to study nature in the way suggested and gardening at the school: it seems to me that these would all take up time and this would make it impossible to carry out the ordinary syllabus.—

*The Chairman:* Those are provided for already.

*Witness:* I understand so. At our conference when the subject of education was taken up we were informed directly from the Department—the information came to me at only second hand—that the syllabus at the present time could stand all the things we had spoken of. I cannot give you anything further than that, but you can get it from the Department. Time, of course, is the essence of a good many things, but surely if what I suggest is going to do a good work you must give up time to it.

94. *Mr. Fowlds.*] But it would be necessary to sacrifice something else?—If you take the children out into the open air that is a good thing in itself.

95. *Mr. Hall.*] You made reference, Mr. Wilson, to lectures being given to the adult population in regard to scientific farming—bee-culture, and so forth. In England, I understand, the County Councils have taken this up, and employ lecturers very widely?—Before you came into the room I stated that the County Councils were doing something, but there are only a limited number of County Councils in England that have taken it up. I said that England was rather behind the times in relation to technical and rural education.

96. *Mr. J. Allen.*] They are waking up very much now there?—There are only a limited number of counties that have got these schools and lecturers going round, but there are a certain number.

97. *Mr. Hall.*] Do you not think the County Councils would exert an influence over the local population that possibly could not be exerted by a central body?—I confess that the County Councils are not doing what they ought to do in New Zealand. They have power under the Counties Act to do a great deal, but they do not do it. I happen to be Chairman of a County Council, and I have had an idea in my mind as to whether I would not bring before the neighbouring counties a suggestion that we should do something, but it has not taken shape yet. Very likely I will bring before the neighbouring counties a suggestion that something should be done under the Act. I admit that the County Councils might, if they were given something to assist them, do a great deal, and the effect might be that the County Councils would be the medium through which you would work. But the idea has not developed in my mind.

98. Do you not think the Councils would have the means of arranging for meetings and rooms, and so forth, with much greater facility than could possibly be the case with a central body?—But you would use the schoolroom. I do not think the arrangement as to a room would have much to do with it, because you have always got the schoolroom.

99. It has been suggested to me to ask you this question: How about the finance?—That must come from the Government. It is quite clear that County Councils cannot do it. The rate-payers are very difficult people to deal with, and the County Councils are bodies that have to keep the rates down as much as possible. All that I suggest, however, is to make the trial of a peripatetic teacher, even if you only do it in one district, and watch the experiment. If we go on considering and do not make a start, I do not know what is going to be done. If we make a start next year, and the Government give, say, £800 for the purpose, and try the experiment in one province—that is what I want to do. Do not let us search for the best means just now; let that evolve. I admit, as I say, it is just possible that the County Councils might be utilised, but let us take some step—let us make a start.

100. Is it your opinion that even though the present syllabus did suffer to some extent, if you had a greater advantage in regard to the matter that you have been advocating to-day, it would be better for the children and the people in general. It would be infinitely better, in my opinion.

101. *Sir W. R. Russell.*] Have you formed any idea as to how many schools a peripatetic teacher could teach?—He could do a great deal in a very short time in the summer. It is a thing that would grow up. He would have to pay a considerable number of visits before he could do