

47. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You heard Mr. Wilson speak of the Council of Education, Mr. Hill?—Yes.

48. You understood what he meant by it?—Yes.

49. A central body, I suppose, he meant?—Yes.

50. Do you approve of that?—At the time he spoke I thought that the best Council really was the Council he was speaking to. It seemed to me that you gentlemen appointed to this Committee have the best opportunity to gain knowledge, and to make suggestions and recommendations with a view to improving the education of the country, and certainly it is needed.

51. In your opinion, an advisory committee such as we have here to advise the Minister would serve the purposes of education as well as the Council suggested by Mr. Wilson?—I think it would serve the purposes of the country most admirably—that is, with the addition of what I should call “technical men,” to give the Committee advice on questions about which of necessity they can know very little.

52. Then, Mr. Wilson spoke of the consolidation of schools in the country districts, and the conveyance from outlying parts to the consolidated school by some means of transport. Is that feasible?—I have made a recommendation to our Board that that should be done, instead of establishing a school at one of these outlying places; but the people at such places feel that they are entitled to a school like their neighbours, and that if their neighbours have a small school they should have one. I believe it would be a great deal better if arrangements could be made to carry the children within a radius of, say, six miles to a school. It would be more economical, and the children would be placed under more favourable working-conditions.

53. Do you think it impossible to get over the local feeling on the matter?—It is simply a matter of government, to my mind. If there were a little bit of backbone shown by the authorities it would be done.

54. The question of local support arose during Mr. Wilson’s evidence—I mean local contribution to the education fund. Do you approve of that?—Most certainly. Formerly, it was very much more common, in Hawke’s Bay, at any rate, to give help than it has been in later years. The reason is that the feeling has been growing among the people that they are entitled to and must have a school, and that everything must be done by the Government. There is no self-reliance at all fostered in our education system.

55. You are, no doubt, aware of the American system of raising funds: What is that?—I am taking it now from the Moseley report. They are provided by the central authorities, the governing authorities.

56. The central authorities of what?—In the various counties—the various boards.

57. It is local taxation?—Yes, and in one of the Moseley reports it is stated that more than half the income of a district is spent upon the furtherance of education, so determined are the people to have good education.

58. Do you ascribe to that the activity and interest in education in America, or to what do you ascribe it? Do you mean the interest among the pupils themselves as well as the teachers?—I would not like to say that, so far as America is concerned. I have not been to America, and I can only go by what I read about the work there; but I have read Professor Armstrong’s report—and he seems to know more about the technical work of a school than most of the other visitors—and he remarks that there is not as much thoroughness in the schools there as is to be found on the average in the Old Country.

59. I was alluding to the general interest taken in education. Is there more interest taken in education amongst the people in America than there is here?—I do not think so. I think our people and children are very much interested in education. I believe local government is the very heart of our education system.

60. You mean by that local taxation too?—I would carry out local taxation. In order to adapt—I am bringing up that matter of adaptation again—in order to adapt and increase the interest I would throw some of the duties on the County Councils and boroughs. Every County Council and borough should manage technical instruction because they have a rating-power.

61. Would you mind, for the edification of the Committee, explaining to us your own ideal of an elementary school in Wellington, say, and an elementary school away in some country district—what the training of the child should be, from the earliest stage up to the Sixth or Seventh Standard. Take Wellington first of all: what should the little child begin with?—I would take him in the training of his observing faculties—that is, everything should pertain to the sensory part of his nature. His sensations should be perfectly educated in accordance with his environments. Everything connected with nature, such as the clouds in the sky, why the wind blows, why it rains, and a hundred similar things provide for a young child lessons for training and thought. At the same time you can teach him the ordinary forms that represent words, and he can learn to read. He can learn to represent words of his own by learning to write—that is, along with the ordinary observational training you introduce the mechanical devices such as reading and writing, and the cognates of reading along with the reading; and there you have the child all prepared and ready to proceed into any of the directing channels of more specialised forms of knowledge.

62. Do those remarks apply to the country school, too?—Yes; but, of course, modified in nature-study to the country.

63. You would differentiate with respect to nature-study between town and country?—I would in every district.

64. Now, I get to the point of supplying the teachers for these various schools with their differentiated nature-studies. Where would you train those teachers?—You would teach them the general principles and they would apply them.

65. Where?—At their own places.

66. Where would you train them? What is your idea of their training?—I would only give them a technical training in a training school—only technical; the university colleges should give them the academic training.