

51. *Mr. Sidey.*] That amounts to this, then: that in your opinion the amount that is put down for maintenance under the Committee's recommendation is rather large?—As far as my Board is concerned, the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. basis would cover also ordinary additions to school buildings. It would not cover an extraordinary addition, such as a very large addition being required to a city school and costing £500 or £600. It would not cover such an addition, but all the ordinary requirements would be met if that £1,000 were released and if the Board had permission to spend it. £8,600 is, I understand, the amount the Board will receive next year. Well, after setting aside the sinking fund for rebuilding I think there would be plenty for the Board to go on. My Board has had hitherto, roughly speaking, a little under £6000.

52. I understand that, in your opinion, the amount allowed under the scale of the Committee is rather large for maintenance, and that you think a small additional sum should be allowed for additions?—It is not too much for maintenance if you will allow these small additions to be made out of it.

53. You think that additions might be included in maintenance, and the sum already allocated would be sufficient?—Yes, provided the Board were free to apply to the Department in any extraordinary case, such, for instance, as those of Waltham and Addington. I spoke just now about the average attendance being a fluctuating basis. I would like to illustrate what I meant. Take North Canterbury: It has a certain number of schools to be maintained, and yet its average attendance has been going down; so that you see in that case the attendance basis would work out unsatisfactorily. The Board would have just the same number of schools to maintain, yet it would not have as much money.

54. Is it your opinion that the present regulations with regard to new buildings should continue, and that you should go to the Department every time you want a new building?—No. The Board thinks it should have more freedom of action, restricted as the Department may regulate—by, for instance, the Inspectors. If the Inspector's report were unfavourable, the Board should not proceed with the work without referring to the Department. I do not think any Board would, if its Inspectors were its experts and if they were decidedly of opinion that the work was not necessary, make application.

55. You mentioned that there is a danger of people in localities appealing from the Boards to the Department while the Department has control?—There is not only a danger, but that is the actual position at the present time. Take the case of Linwood. Although members of the Board have been through the district twice and there is a school within a mile and a half of the locality where the residents want one, they are not satisfied, and on the last occasion they said to the members, "We will appeal to the Government." They know that now the Board has not the final decision, that it rests with the Department, and they are going to appeal to the Department. This undermines the influence of the Board, and it will make the teachers and Committees unsettled. A teacher will apply for, say, an additional room, which the Board does not think is wanted. "Oh," the teacher will say, "what does the Department say?" and he will want the matter referred to the higher authority.

56. How far would you go? Would you have everything settled by the Board and not by the Department—I mean, as regards new buildings?—I think that all the administration might be left to the Boards—properly safeguarded in the way I have mentioned—that where the Inspector's reports were unfavourable the matter should be referred to the Department.

57. But where the Inspectors reported in favour of a new school?—If the Board and the expert are in favour of a new school I think it should go on.

58. No matter what the amount, and without any further investigation by the Government?—Well, I think the Inspectors, being the Board's experts, they have all the knowledge that the Department can have, and the Board, being on the spot, it knows the actual needs of the locality. I do not think any Board and its Inspectors, taking them together, would go in for unnecessary expense.

59. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You are speaking for your own district, I presume?—Entirely.

60. Not from a general point of view?—No.

61. Your Board has kept the schools in North Canterbury in good repair, has it not?—Yes; generally speaking, they are in very good repair. A number of cases have had to stand over owing to the Board's funds having become exhausted.

62. I am talking of maintenance, pure and simple?—Yes.

63. Maintenance has had to stand over?—Yes.

64. Why?—Take last year. In 1903 the Board spent £2,417 on maintenance, simply because it had not any more money. There were some other cases that required attention. In 1901 it spent £4,957, and in 1902 £4,106. In 1901 the Board had to go to the Department for an advance of £2,000. The effect of that was felt later on, and consequently the Board had to restrict its expenditure last year. But it is true that, generally speaking, the condition of the Board's buildings is very good.

65. I presume from what you say that money that ought to have been spent purely upon maintenance has gone for some other object?—No, it has not gone for any other purpose. The expenditure was anticipated. In 1901 nearly £5,000 was spent on maintenance, and in the next year £4,106, leaving the Board very little to spend last year, having regard to the need of keeping within bounds.

66. Generally speaking, though, your schools are in thorough repair?—Generally speaking, they are in good order.

67. Are you aware of what is taking place in other districts with regard to repairs—to maintenance?—I understand that in some of the districts the buildings are in a poor way.

68. Yes. I do not know whether you have read an account of a meeting of the Wellington Board of Education in the *New Zealand Times* of the 30th September last?—No. I saw an article this morning.