

wish to lay before you more especially some considerations that may tend to show that while the teachers of to-day have no accumulated fund or State-granted rights that may entitle them to more liberal treatment than they would otherwise look for, they have still, from the underpayment of the service for many years, an accumulation of arrears that may give them some moral claim. At the risk of iteration I beg to give evidence of the feeling of gratification that the introduction of this long-promised measure has given rise to among teachers, and to bear witness to their sense of the liberality of most of the proposals that the Bill makes. For new entrants and for the younger original contributors the provisions that are made will do much to render the profession more popular, and to put a stop to that exodus of able men that has been a somewhat marked feature of the last decade. It is only when we come to the provision that has been made for teachers of the age of thirty-five and upwards that disappointment is felt—and when you remember that both by the provisions of the Bill that was introduced in 1902 by the Hon. Sir Joseph Ward, and by the treatment that has been meted out to other Government employees, teachers have been almost educated to expect some greater recognition of back service than this Bill grants—you can understand the feeling of keen disappointment that was experienced when it was found that no provision beyond a minimum annuity of £52 had been made. The Bill of 1902, as you will remember, although it granted eightieths instead of sixtieths, allowed all service since the passing of the Education Act of 1877 to count in calculating the annuity, and when it was telegraphed throughout the colony that the Premier, as Minister of Education, was introducing a Bill that granted sixtieths instead of eightieths teachers now up in years felt that a most generous recognition was being made of their past services, and laid aside that anxiety for their future that must keenly distress men and women who are fast approaching the time when effective execution of their duties becomes increasingly difficult. Under these circumstances it does not seem unnatural that many resolutions, some of them somewhat severe, should have been adopted by branches of the Educational Institute throughout the colony, and that both the Premier and other members of your House should have been delayed with wires on the subject, seeing that teachers had, as I have already said, been almost taught to look forward to something better. It is also possible, however, that the feeling that many of the older members of the profession were not being treated as fairly as they think they may have deserved, nor as liberally as others have been treated, may have some foundation in the fact that it is admitted that for many years teachers have not been receiving such salaries as were due to the work they were called upon to perform; and I beg to lay before this Committee some considerations that may tend to show that—large as is the amount stated by the actuary to be necessary to render financially sound the scheme that has been outlined by the conference between the executive of the institute and the Government representatives—a great part may be regarded as an acknowledgement of the low salaries that have been paid to teachers in former years. I may here say that there is a feeling general among teachers that, as in duty bound, the actuary has felt himself compelled to make allowance for contingencies that may or may not arise, and that it will be found in actual experience that many of them will not arise, so that the large amounts quoted will not really be required. To return to the underpayment of the profession, it will be admitted, I think, by all members of this Committee that during recent years the supply of teachers, more especially of male teachers, for our country schools has not been sufficient to meet the demand. Education Boards have found it necessary, in many cases, to place uncertificated teachers in charge of schools that ought to be officered by trained and competent teachers, and in the case of other schools to appoint women teachers in place of men. This, again, has led to demands on the number of our women teachers so great that it has been found necessary to appoint uncertificated women to positions that should be occupied by certificated teachers. In 1901, I understand the Otago Board of Education had not an uncertificated teacher in its ranks, and a statement recently issued under the authority of that body calls attention to the fact that there are now forty in their employment, a state of matters that calls for grave consideration, and, if possible, remedy. Again the ranks of the profession are being steadily drained by an exodus of some of our most promising and able men, who feel that in other walks of life they can secure greater remuneration and less irksome conditions of work than prevail in the teaching profession. This exodus has been a serious loss to the country, and has tended to lower the standard of teachers, and it seems necessary in the interests of education to offer such inducements as shall tend to keep within the ranks of teachers those who have given promise of high efficiency. A few years ago, when Parliament introduced the colonial scale of salaries, it was generally acknowledged that the teachers were being underpaid, in some cases shamefully so, and that education in some districts had suffered severely. Since that time nearly £40,000 a year has been added to the salaries bill of the primary-school teachers. That even this amount has been insufficient is shown by the fact that the Premier feels that even now teachers are not in a position in many cases to pay the contributions required from them to enable the Government to make some scheme for a reasonable provision for old-age annuities, and proposes to add another £26,000 to the salary bill. The Premier himself says that it was consideration of the low salaries that women had all along been receiving that induced him to fix a minimum of £52, so that those receiving the lower salaries could get advantage of it. Teachers think that this statement as to low salaries is not applicable to women only, but also to men teachers whose responsibilities as a rule are greater than those of women, and many of whom have been utterly unable to meet those responsibilities, to maintain the position which men of their class must maintain, and at the same time to make due provision for their old age. It is felt by many teachers that these men have served the State well, and that at the age of sixty they may well look for a little better provision than at the age of sixty-five would be made for a man and his wife under the old-age-pension scheme. There are those coming after me who will show what is being done in other countries to recognise the services of teachers, so that that is a subject I need not here enter on, but in regard to the new provisions that are being made I trust that you will kindly, sir, allow me to say one word. I am aware that it may be slightly outside your order of reference, but it is a subject of so great importance to the profession and to education that I