

206. It is only the optional age that you wish reduced?—That is so. I think it would be such a relief to a woman to know that she could retire at fifty.

207. In your opinion the optional retiring-age should be fifty?—The optional should be fifty, and the retiring-age sixty. This extract bears on the matter: "The average professional life of a German teacher is twenty-five years, and since the passing of the Pensions Act the profession is decidedly youthful in some States." That has been the effect in other countries of the introduction of a pension scheme.

208. *The Chairman.*] I take your meaning to be this: that in order to get what we should all like to see—namely, a body of teachers who would be interested in their work, and at the same time be capable of undertaking it, it is much more important that proper provision be made for a superannuation scheme than for any large increase of salaries?—I think so, yes. If you will allow me just to modify what I said, I think the burden on the State for education purposes is already a very large one in comparison with the total of the colony's expenditure, and I do not think any sum that the State could give would be so valuable as by way of superannuation.

209. We have heard about some teachers at sixty-five getting £300 a year. Are they capable of doing their work at that age?—I met such a man the other day who said he was. He said he was doing his work as well as he did at thirty.

210. *Mr. Lewis.*] Did you ask his Board? What would they say?—His Board have found no fault with his work. I am just giving an actual case.

JAMES HAMILTON HARKNESS examined. (No. 11.)

211. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Harkness?—Headmaster of the Reefton District High School, and a member of the executive of the New Zealand Educational Institute.

212. Will you make your statement, please?—Yes, sir. Although I am a member of the New Zealand Educational Institute Executive, I do not speak for the executive, of course, but for the small Institutes on the west coast of the South Island. If I could not speak for them I think that any personal evidence I should have to give would not be of much use, or would be hardly worth giving. I am sure I can endorse what has been stated—that we are pleased to see such a Bill, as far as it goes. At the same time I may say that, as a member of the teachers' conference that conferred with the Inspector-General and the Government Actuary, I must express very keen disappointment indeed that some of the provisions that we resolved upon are not incorporated in the Bill. This more especially refers to back service not being taken into account. The Westland teachers met since I left, and I believe they said they would be satisfied with nothing less than the benefits under the Railway and Police Superannuation Funds. To discuss this is, I understand, outside the order of reference. I had not an opportunity of meeting them to show what the conference had arrived at. I think they would have been perfectly satisfied if I could have placed clearly before them what the conference arrived at. As to the need for such a Bill being passed quickly, a great deal has been said about good men leaving the service. I think more might be said, and justly said, about the lack of men entering the service. Figures were quoted this morning, and I can quote others that I got from Inspector Goyen this morning, showing that at the Normal College in Dunedin, out of sixty-two students this year, one only was a male. I believe that the Chairman of the Otago Education Board said that four had been there during the year; but the Inspector said he understood that there was one male out of sixty-two students now being trained for teaching in Otago. This may not be an argument as to teachers being dissatisfied, because some people always say that they would like another profession than their own; but I honestly believe that if a referendum were taken of all the male teachers it would be found that a vast majority of those who have been in the service some considerable time would say they would change if they could. They have been in too long, perhaps, and missed the chance. Well, that is rather a sad confession, I think, because, in my opinion, the work will not be as well done by a man who thinks he would rather be doing something else; and, while such men may do the work well and show enthusiasm, I do not think their whole heart can be in the work if they think they have missed being something better. A scheme such as this, giving something specific for them to look forward to, would, I think, reconcile them a great deal to the profession they are in and cause them to do better work. As to back service, I understand that Mr. Davidson has made a proposal that for service prior to the coming into operation of the Act, but not going back further than 1877, one-eightieth should be allowed. I can see the difficulties in the way—the amount of money that the Government would require to guarantee—and I am perfectly prepared to admit that to be possibly the best thing that could be got. I think it would to a large extent be a recognition of what we want—one-eightieth for original members, and the sixtieth to apply from the time of contribution. With regard to helping the fund, I was consulted by wire as to whether I would agree to a proposal to place the £26,000 proposed to be given in increases of salaries to the credit of the fund, and I replied, promptly and at once, that I would. I think that all the teachers I have consulted since are of the same opinion. I understood when I replied that this sum was to go in addition to contributions; otherwise I did not see that it was giving up anything at all. I understood that clearly when I sent the reply; but I had not much opportunity at the time of conferring with any one. At the same time it crossed my mind that if it were necessary to forego the increase for more than one year I should be equally willing; but as to the thing going on indefinitely, I am in the same position, perhaps, as the last witness. I can hardly speak as to the suggestion, because we do not know exactly, in black and white, what it would require to finance the scheme. But I think I can say straight out that the teachers of New Zealand want a good sound superannuation scheme more than they want a trifling increase of salary. It seems to me that strong arguments might be brought forward for this recognition of back service. The Government, by giving the increases of salaries that they have already given, have confessed and the people of New Zealand have admitted, that teachers in the past have been inadequately paid; and the Government, by proposing this present increase of 6½ per cent in