

are skilled in the principles and methods of education. But first I desire to point out two surface anomalies in the system, in so far as it affects non-State secondary schools: (1.) Maori children are allowed to take out scholarships in private secondary schools under Government inspection. This reasonable and proper right has not yet been generally extended to the children of white parents. (2.) Section 67 (2) of the amended Education Act of 1908 reads, in regard to Board and Private Scholarships: "The holder of any such scholarship shall receive the amount of his scholarship only so long as he prosecutes his studies to the satisfaction of the Board at a secondary school, or its equivalent approved by the Board." I am advised that the "equivalent" school here referred to may be interpreted to mean any secondary school, public or private, of an educational standing approved for this purpose by the Board. I am, furthermore, informed that this subsection of the Act is, in practice, so interpreted in the case of two large private secondary schools in this Dominion—one at Wanganui, the other at Christchurch. Thus far we have been unable to secure the application of this interpretation, under any conditions, to any one of the many excellent secondary schools conducted by Catholics in New Zealand. However, if the term "equivalent" in this connection should be deemed to be ambiguous, or if it should not fairly bear the meaning alleged to be attached to it in two particular cases, I suggest that this and the corresponding sections of the Act should be so amended as to make scholarships available, as a matter of course and right, at all secondary schools that are open to Government inspection, and, educationally, up to the Government programme. This remark also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to free places. The suggested amendment of the Act would bring New Zealand into line with New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, where both the Government schools and the private schools have mutually benefited by a healthy and generous competition. I now refer more particularly to primary schools. It is a sound principle of statecraft that taxes which are levied from all should, in some shape or other, be used for the benefit of all. In the matter of public instruction we in New Zealand do not follow that golden rule. Our Catholic schools and many other religious schools long formed a part of the State system. We did not withdraw from that system. We were excluded from it by Act of Parliament in 1877. To many of the legislators of the time that measure was a well-intentioned effort to secure what is an absolute impossibility in any system of education—namely neutrality in regard to religious faith. Now, I wish to direct the particular attention of the Commission to the most serious and radical defect in the public-school system. The religious schools were not alone excluded by Act of Parliament from their previous standing as public schools, but they were excluded on what is, in effect, a dogmatic religious test. This test is supplied by sundry views of religion—by sundry religious dogmas—which constitute the foundation of the secular phase of our Education Act. I will here mention only two of these underlying dogmas. The first is this: that religion has no necessary or useful place in school training. The second dogma is this: that a political majority has the moral right to exclude religion from the place which it has occupied from immemorial ages in education. Take away these dogmas and you sweep aside the foundation on which the secular phase of our Education Act is based. I will not take up the time of the Commission by pointing out certain other dogmatic views of religion which are also implied in our secular-school system. But we have here what is tantamount to a State creed—a creed of not many articles, but a creed which, within its limits, is as dogmatic as the agnostic creed or the Nicene creed or the Westminster Confession of Faith. Moreover, our Education Act has, in the schools, established these dogmatic views of religion, and endowed them at the common expense of all. It has extended no such privilege to the many who cannot in conscience accept these dogmas. In view of the compulsory clauses of the Act, and in the absence, over wide areas, of an alternative system, the only alternative for dissidents are the following: they must either do violence to their conscientious convictions or they must pay for the educational system which their conscience demands, and at the same time pay in taxation for the system which their conscience rejects. Here we have in practical working what I have already described—a system that, in effect, allots educational taxation on what is, fundamentally, a dogmatic religious test. We respect the motive of those legislators who desired to establish a course of public instruction uncoloured by religious views, so far as that motive may have been dictated by respect for the religious susceptibilities of pupils. But the legislators have obviously failed to establish a system objectively neutral in all that concerns religion. In fact, objective neutrality in this connection is as much an impossibility as a square circle. This impossibility (as I have shown in recent publications) arises out of the very nature of the case; it is evidenced by the declarations of many leading educationists, and by the frank admissions of the standard-bearers of the purely secular system in the country in which it took its rise. So true it is that if you throw one set of dogmas regarding religion out by the school door, another set will immediately come in by the window. On the part of a large section of taxpayers, I would press upon this Commission the need of according the same general educational treatment to the consciences that cannot as to the consciences that can accept those views of religion upon which our Education Act is based. A very considerable body of people in this Dominion hold the following views of the place of religion in education: They hold to the old and more generally accepted doctrine that religion is an essential part of all education properly so called. They believe that education is a vital and continuous process, proceeding on essentially uniform principles both in the home and in the school, which is merely an extension of the home. They believe that it is a grave educational error to expose the child to opposite educational influences in the school and in the well-regulated home, as, for instance, by treating his moral and intellectual faculties as if they were so many watertight compartments. They hold that the State is not above or beyond the reach of the moral law, that it has not a radically different aim from that of the individual, and that the child's high capacity for religious and moral growth is, when duly developed, of enormous value as a national asset. It therefore seems to us that, even from the patriotic viewpoint, it would be a calamity for any school system