

71. And that many uncertificated teachers are to be found on the staffs of the larger schools?—Yes, undoubtedly. The plan of the Auckland Board is very largely to send out trained teachers into the backblock schools. It is part of their rules that every student must serve two years in the country before he can get promotion.

72. Suppose the Education Board, in selecting teachers for these sole-teacher schools within a radius of ten or twenty miles of Auckland, selected the very best teachers, would it not be possible to do as you do in the case of city schools—send your students for a shorter or longer time to these sole-teacher schools where excellent teachers are to be found?—We have already two schools attached to the Normal School—one a country school, taught by one teacher; and another a junior country school, taught by one lady teacher of particularly good qualifications. The teaching in that school is the same teaching that we get in the standards, except as to the problem of managing all the classes at once, but it is not necessary for the students to be there quite so long. If they are there a week they learn as much as they are probably likely to learn.

73. You think that the one sole-teacher school in connection with the Training College is sufficient for the 100 students?—We were also using the Mangere Bridge School at one time; that was a two-teacher school.

WILLIAM OLIVER LAMB examined on oath. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are your qualifications and position?—I hold a C1 certificate, and I am headmaster of the Maungakarama School. I am also president of the Auckland Country Teachers' Association.

2. What are the matters in the order of reference with which you wish to deal?—Speaking on behalf of the association, I would like to state that the grading scheme of the Auckland Board, though not recognized as a perfect one, has the confidence of the country teachers. Our reason for that confidence is this: Under the old system canvassing was rife, and in that respect the country teacher was distinctly handicapped. He was too far from the centre, and not in a position even to make the influence of his friends felt. He therefore welcomed a change that should be based on merit alone. I think the Auckland Country Teachers' Association was the first body to ask the Board to send only one name to the School Committee when an appointment was about to be made—that of the teacher standing highest on the list. That was in March, 1900. We were therefore exceedingly pleased later on to find that the Board had adopted that principle—the automatic principle. The four-name system had been proved unsatisfactory. In the percentage of marks one candidate might be removed from another by ninety or even a hundred places in the numerical order, therefore the sending of four names was ineffectual. Apart from that, the teachers knew in many cases the man who ought to get the position on his merits, and under the four-name system that man often did not get it. I have said that we do not consider the present scheme perfect. We should have liked to see not only the percentage of marks but the order of merit sent to the Committee, and we asked the Board for that concession, but the Board could not see its way to grant it. Nevertheless, when a motion was tabled hostile to the scheme the country teachers overlooked this defect. They felt that they were going to lose something if the scheme were pushed aside, and they reaffirmed their confidence in it. In any scheme of promotion, however, we consider that special marks should be given for service in the remote districts in the backblocks, because of the peculiar hardships of life in those districts, and his remoteness from the University College, and the benefits of tuition generally. Probably the greater number of the uncertificated teachers will, on that account, be found in the country. I may say that there are one thousand three hundred uncertificated teachers in the Dominion. If in any promotion scheme certain marks were allowed for a partial certificate, that would be an encouragement to the backblocks teachers to improve their status. I am not in agreement with those who would abolish the examinations for Junior National Scholarships and Education Board Scholarships, and substitute a Free Place Examination. I would be in favour of abolishing all three and making the avenue to secondary education a certificate awarded by the Inspector after consultation with the head teacher of the school. All teachers of experience know that many candidates are fitted to receive that certificate who cannot do themselves justice in an examination. I consider that secondary education should be free and accessible to all who are fitted for it. The chief avenue to it at the present time is the certificate of proficiency, and I would like to ask, What percentage of the candidates who are able to avail themselves of that certificate come from the country? There is considerable leakage and economic waste in the fact that the country children do not come to the secondary schools. We are told that this is essentially an agricultural country, and that our children should be given a bias towards the land. But what must be the feelings of a country parent who has a particularly bright child whom he is unable to send to a secondary school? It must be one of his bitterest regrets. I think that last year something like £10,000 was allocated for National Scholarships. If some of this were given to country children as boarding-allowances, I think there would be a great gain. I think the competitive system is entirely out of harmony with the spirit of the syllabus and with the spirit of modern education, and should be entirely wiped away. I contend, further, that the ability of many children is not discovered at the age of fourteen. As an ex-student of the Thames High School, I notice that many of my old schoolmates who have since been successful in life did not attain to positions of honour in the school. One of them, now a Doctor of Science, and successful in the practical affairs of the world, did not put his best foot forward until he was sixteen, while any number of men now successful were not winners of either Senior or Junior Scholarships. We may, in exalting early precocity, be passing over the child of average attainments. That is a question we should keep in mind. I think that the accrediting system might be a means of lessening