

on stationery and so on, while the Boards are given such practically overruling functions, I do not know. In an ordinary way I would sooner trust to a School Committee than I would trust to a Board, because it is composed of the parents of the children who attend the school, and who have the interest of the school at heart. Yet a Committee composed of these parents is overruled and ignored and treated with contempt by a Board situated 100 or 180 miles away, the members of which probably have never seen the school or district. That seems to me a very absurd position. Indeed, it is very difficult for me to imagine a worse one. First of all, I should say the Boards could be wiped out without any loss whatever. They do not perform any really vital function in the education system of this country. The employment of Inspectors and the classification of teachers could be done by the central office in Wellington. All the waste that now takes place could be avoided by giving control to the Department, with local control by the Committee. But there is one thing I wish to say in regard to the functions of the Committee—I do not suppose Committees generally will support me—I do not think School Committees should have anything whatever to do in the appointment of a teacher or with the control of a teacher. I have taken a bit of interest in teaching, and I think there should be some means by which the Head Department could classify each grade of teachers and appoint them to positions purely on merit. In the case of equal merit I would let the appointment go by seniority. I would let the Department in Wellington employ the Inspectors. I think it is a wrong principle that a Board should employ both teachers and Inspectors. The Inspectors cover the same ground in our district year after year for perhaps thirty or forty years. Now, Inspectors are only human, and they get their likes and dislikes. If the Central Department or Board in Wellington was employing them you would probably have an Inspector in Southland this year and in Auckland next year, and so on, and that Inspector would be much more likely to give an absolutely unbiassed report and judgment than an Inspector who is going the same old round year after year. Again, there is always trouble cropping up between Committees and Boards in regard to the selection of teachers. As an alternative method, you might wipe out Committees altogether, and have the whole of your education controlled by one department in Wellington, just as you control the whole of the police courts and post-offices, and so on, from Wellington. While you have a teacher, say, in a country district with a Committee practically over him composed perhaps of men of limited attainments, and not so cultured or sensitive as the teacher, there is always a possibility of a little friction. It is the same in regard to the selection of a teacher. A Presbyterian Committee will favour a Presbyterian teacher, and a Prohibition Committee a prohibition teacher. All these phases are apt to crop up. I think it is very degrading to have teachers going around pulling the wires in order to get a selection. I have seen that sort of thing in Auckland and Gisborne, and it is not a proper thing at all. There should be some system of grading teachers by which a teacher would put in an application for a position, and under which he would get that position or lose it on his merits. I was rather prominently connected with one case in Auckland where the teacher came into conflict, first of all with the Committee, and subsequently with the Board and the Inspectors. There was a terrible row, and the whole matter finished up with a case before the teachers' Court of Appeal. The consequence of that was we had a dreadful School Committee election, with three policemen in attendance, with a final result that the teacher was reinstated and got substantial damages. At the same time, that did no good to the cause of education. It degraded the teacher in the eyes of the children, and it caused all sorts of local trouble in the district. All that would be avoided if School Committees were wiped out and teachers were put in these positions by reason of merit and long service, and kept under the absolute control of the Department. I do not think corruption and prejudice are altogether confined to School Committees. In my experience they are much more common to Boards than to School Committees. I think the whole system needs overhauling, and I have come to that conclusion after my experience both as a parent and as a member of a School Committee, and after comparing the systems with systems I have known and studied elsewhere.

3. *Mr. Wells.*] You mentioned the desks in use: is it the custom throughout your district to use these long desks?—It is a new district. They gave us dual desks in the standards, and long desks in the infants.

4. You spoke of trouble with unclean children: you know, of course, as a Committeeman, that the teacher and the Committee have full power to deal with anything of that kind?—Yes, but it is such a delicate subject to handle, and so apt to bring the teacher into conflict with the parents. If there was some system by which a nurse could go around the schools and make a thorough examination it would save all that trouble.

5. I gather from your remarks that you are not in favour of Committees having any voice in the appointment of teachers?—Provided the Boards are abolished.

6. Supposing teachers in the Board's service are graded by the Inspectors, who know them intimately and can appraise their work, and that all appointments are made from that list in order of merit, where is the objection?—In the first place, what are the qualifications of the Inspectors for grading? I have known Inspectors in Auckland who have been dry-goods clerks at one time, and not trained teachers at all. What is their grading worth? If they were competent Inspectors, I should say it would be all right.

7. Do you not think your strictures on the members of your Board are a rather severe indictment of the School Committees in regard to the choice of their men?—That is a matter we will endeavour to remedy in the near future.

8. The Boards are selected by the School Committees?—Yes. But the Committees are over such a scattered area that it is only lately they have been able to come in contact with each other.

9. As to your reference to smoky chimneys and so on, I imagine that is an isolated example of faulty building?—I do not know. That is the first school I have had anything to do with. It is a brand-new school, but it does not speak much for the Board's idea of architecture that that should happen.