

Purdie's suggestions for the concentration of pupils of Standards IV, V, and VI in city and suburban schools. The matter was discussed at the quarterly meeting to-day, when it was decided—'That the Auckland District Institute of the N.Z.E.I. approves of the principle embodied in Inspector Purdie's proposals for the grouping of Standards IV, V, and VI in separate schools, and considers that the practical value of the scheme is worthy of being tested by the Board.'—I have, &c., COLIN R. MUNRO, Secretary.—The Secretary, Education Board, Auckland."

I invited various educational bodies to express as fully and clearly as possible any objection they might have to the principle enunciated in this memorandum, and in no case was any criticism of a hostile nature offered. It was, however, pointed out that as the law stands it was impracticable to put the scheme into operation. I quite agree with that view, but I deny altogether that that is any criticism of the scheme or the principle underlying it. I take it that one of the functions of this Commission is the consideration of the schemes for improvement of education such as I have submitted, and that if this scheme commends itself to the Commission they will advise that it be embodied and translated into law. I was a school-teacher for some thirty years, and I feel very strongly that the gravest injustice is being done to-day to the bright children of the community, and also that a large number of the children who are not perhaps of the brightest are being made less bright than they initially were. As educators, I take it that we should all do our utmost to make the most of the latent intellect of the children. I think that in this country, as in all countries, one of the saddest of spectacles is the enormous waste of intellectual power which is going on, and that a scheme such as I have devised would in the large centres of population go a long way towards decreasing the waste of intellectual power. There are other matters that I would have liked to discuss, but I will reserve those for my written communication to the Commission. As I have stated, I was an Inspector of Schools for many years, and I think that the work of the Inspectors might be made more effective in some directions without any added cost to the State.

3. Will you state in what direction?—I think each Inspector should be placed in definite charge of a district. That system obtains in the Auckland District at the present time. But while he is in nominal charge of the district he is not, and I think no Inspector in New Zealand is made responsible for his district. What I mean is this: Suppose that when I was in charge of the northern district the Department had had a staff of supervisory Inspectors, men in the highest rank of profession, and those men had gone into my district and held not this, that, or the other teacher, but myself responsible for the state of the district, then, I maintain, the schools in the out-district would be more efficient than they are to-day. I merely put that forward as a tentative suggestion—that by organizing the inspectorate the responsibility for the condition of the district would be thrown upon the Inspector. His responsibility will then radiate to the teacher, and he will feel it incumbent upon him to feel that the teaching is efficient. I would like to say, and say with a very great deal of diffidence, that when I went into one particular district I found that only one large school was being efficiently conducted. Inspectors had gone through that district for twenty years, and, in my opinion, the absence of responsibility on their part had led to that condition of affairs. If necessary, I can prove that what I am stating on this point is correct. It took me five years' work in that district to dispossess five of the largest schools of the incompetent teachers they had. That state of affairs should not obtain, and, I maintain, would not obtain if definite responsibility of the district were placed upon the Inspector.

4. You say that those five teachers were, in your opinion, inefficient?—Quite so. That was indicated by the Board's action in moving them at my suggestion later on.

5. *Mr. Pirani.*] Would not your last suggestion be almost impracticable, unless the Inspector had power to remove inefficient teachers?—It would; but I would get over that difficulty. The Inspector would have his safeguard in this way: He would report definitely and distinctly to the Board. If he were in charge of the district, he would go to the inefficiently conducted school four or five times. Two visits a year are nonsensical. He would do his utmost as a human quantity to help another human quantity to make a school efficient. If he found that the teacher could not come up to the mark, he would report to the Board in definite and distinct terms. The onus would then rest upon the Board to carry out his idea as indicated in his report. If the Board did not adopt his recommendation, and one of the staff of supervising Inspectors came into the district and pronounced the school inefficient, the Inspector would simply say, "The onus is off my shoulders. I have reported to the Board in distinct terms that the school is inefficient, and the Board has done nothing."

6. Would it not be a rather heavy task for the Inspector from Wellington to judge the school by one visit?—No. I think an Inspector who knows his business can get a very fair idea of the state of a school in a very short time; and if he found it necessary to make further examination to confirm his judgment, he could stay a day or two in the district and make certain. Any competent school-master will go into a school, and by forming his opinion of its tone, and seeing a little of the work, will in an hour or two get a very fair idea of the condition of the school.

7. But if it means dismissal of a teacher, would it not be necessary to have absolute proof of his inefficiency?—That is so. Well, he can get absolute proof by submitting work to the scholars. Of course, the decision would rest with the supervising Inspector, and I take it that it would very rarely happen that the subordinate Inspector would not accept the verdict of his senior.

8. But would that evidence be sufficient to satisfy a teachers' court of appeal?—If it is not, there should be remedial legislation. Personally, I think that while the teachers' court of appeal has been a valuable court both for teachers and pupils, there are many directions in which it could be modified. For instance, I think that if a teacher in a country district is absolutely a *persona non grata* it is ridiculous that simply to conserve his private rights the children of the district should suffer. The Board should have the right to transfer him under such conditions.