

SARAH ANN MOORE-JONES examined on oath. (No. 15.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am Principal of the Ladies' College at Remuera—a private school.

2. Have you been a school-teacher?—Yes. I had a D certificate under the old regulations. When I taught in England I had a first-class certificate. I was Mistress of Method at Cheltenham College, and Headmistress of the Model School at the same place.

3. What is the subject you wish to bring before the Commission?—I cannot represent all the private schools, because I have not consulted with them. This is what I wish to bring before the Commission: By the Education Act of 1908, paragraph 170, it is enacted that where teachers or managers of private schools desire to have such schools inspected by an Inspector, &c., "the local Board of Education shall therefore arrange for the inspection . . . such inspection to be conducted in like manner as the inspection of public schools." The Government inspection of private schools every sincere educationist must indorse as necessary, good, and just; but I would respectfully draw the attention of the Commission to the fact that inspection in its literal sense, unaccompanied by individual examination, as now interpreted by the Board of Education, should be amply sufficient to satisfy any Inspector that "regular and efficient instruction" is given in any school under inspection. Having had long experience in public and private schools, I venture to submit that, now examinations are in disfavour, such inspections accompanied with *individual examination* are prejudicial to the welfare of private schools, since many parents send their children to them principally to avoid the Board's examinations, the strain and excitement of which they desire to protect their children from. I ask the Commission in its work of reform to eliminate from the Act of 1908, paragraph 170, the words "such inspection (of private schools) to be conducted in like manner as the inspection of public schools," and to make it plain that such inspection of private schools be confined to the literal meaning of "inspection," and not to include examination of pupils unless specially asked for by the managers or principals of such private schools. In making this request I would show that such examinations of pupils of private schools by the local Board of Education accompanying its inspection are unnecessary, impolitic, fettering, narrowing, an infringement of the liberty of the subject, curtailing private enterprise, calculated to stereotype the individual, to kill originality, and giving the local Board of Education (not composed of educationists) undue local power, while subjecting the pupils of such schools to ordeals in examinations by strangers which their parents, for physical reasons, wish to spare them. The inspection of all private and secondary schools is beyond criticism. I find "secondary" schools mean only those receiving Government grants, therefore this plea is not for them. I venture to assert that any trained Inspector of Schools can thoroughly inspect a private school by examination of the rolls, the time-tables, the syllabus, by hearing the ordinary lessons, and by noticing the general application of the pupils, the discipline maintained, and by ascertaining the status of the teachers; and from these data he should be empowered by the Act to certify if the instruction given in such private school "be efficient and regular" or not. Such inspectorial visits would be welcomed by every private school worthy of its existence, and without notice at any time, thus effecting a saving of Inspector's and clerk's and secretary's time, and a saving of printing and issue. The servants of the local Boards of Education must submit to all its by-laws and regulations, seeing they are supported by that Board; but the principal of a private school finds his independence intruded upon, his privacy invaded, his responsibility increased thereby, seeing he must satisfy the local Board's Inspector as well as himself and the parents of his pupils. Moreover, his time is greatly occupied in studying and replying to the ever-increasing demands of printed matter arriving by post from the local Board of Education. The Inspector from the local Board, too, may be a neighbour, and the day before he visits the private school may have inspected and examined the neighbouring Board school, affording opportunity of invidious remarks from the "man in the street." The office must be as obnoxious to a refined, cultured Inspector as to the principal of an independent private school. It is self-evident that principals of private schools will employ such teachers and teach such subjects as will command the confidence of their patrons—the public; but if the local Board of Education is ever allowed to dictate what is to be taught and what not taught in private schools, we shall be educating the pupils according to the caprice of an ever-changing Board, and, judging by late years of experimental education, shall sometimes teach no history, sometimes no geography, sometimes only physical and mathematical geography, and always, I fear, without any study of the Bible. Not only will subjects be curtailed by a local Board of Education when it acquires the power, but even the very reading and books of study will be prescribed, and consequently the young people of New Zealand will be in danger of being educated narrowly and illiberally, tending to isolated insularism. Parents and teachers will find their freedom of action limited, the former in the protection of their children from fret and fume of examinations, and the teacher would necessarily find himself limiting his actions to what will please the local Board of Education's Inspector. Under such conditions of servitude to a local Education Board, no inducements will offer to private professors and qualified certified teachers to adopt the profession and responsibility of private schools, which are a distinct gain, and no charge on the Government of the country, seeing it is reckoned £60 per annum is saved the State on every pupil educated at such private schools. It is clear that if all the children of the colony are thus to be educated, all individuality will be erased, and the pupils will be stamped out like pins in a row or buttons on a card. Alas! there are worse dangers ahead. What is to protect our children from the regulations of a local Education Board, whose personalia, however good, is ever in transition? And who can tell what heresies of thought in sociology even may yet appear in its prescribed syllabus, or be infused in the literature it may recommend? All thinkers and educationists agree that originality in the successful teacher is priceless and unpurchasable; yet it will be perfectly impossible to keep it if the local Boards of Education are to have power to examine pupils of private schools.