

18. Now, each of these twenty letters might be a letter objecting to the policy, or suggesting amendments?—They would come to me.

19. There may be complaints as to the policy?—We have had one person complaining every year since I have been in the Department. She is complaining against one of the Boards, and she has got the same answer every time, that it is a matter for the Board. She thinks it ought not to be a matter for the Board. I think it should be, and not only that, but the Act lays down that it is. I know she wrote about it this year, because she wrote to me personally. I see no need for me to deal with such cases personally.

20. *Mr. Wells.*] In regard to claims for new buildings, you very often hear complaints about delay: we are sure to meet with that on our journey?—If you inquire into the amount of delay here and the amount of delay in England, you would be astonished to find how quickly we get through them. There are a good many questions to be settled before a grant for a new building can be given at all.

21. *Mr. Kirk.*] There is this aspect of my question: Seeing you have so much correspondence to deal with, is it not possible that some of the letters that come to you could be dealt with by the Education Boards?—We remit everything to the Education Boards within their powers and discretion. I will say that unreservedly. If a letter comes from a teacher about any special matter concerning his school or appointment, or anything except his certificate, it is a matter for the Board, and we are constantly sending replies to that effect. Now and then a new officer may draft a reply which is brought in to be signed by the responsible head, and it may escape notice. I have been in the English Civil Service, and such things certainly escape notice there sometimes. But, otherwise, matters that can be dealt with by the Education Boards we are only too glad to get them to deal with. It is our policy to do so.

22. Your policy is a sympathetic policy?—Decidedly. The Education Boards have done grand work, and if the Education Boards disappeared you would have to have some other similar bodies, if you are going to secure efficient administration. I do not believe in central administration at all. I am very strongly against central administration. I do not believe in the Australian system. As to "The powers and rights possessed respectively by Education Boards and other local educational authorities, and whether they should be extended," I do not quite know what this means; so far as the English of it goes, it would have no reference to the Central Department at all, but only to the Education Boards and other local education authorities. The other local bodies are School Committees, High School Boards, and Managers of Technical Schools, but I do not quite understand the implied antithesis.

23. *Mr. Pirani.*] I will put the position to you this way: Do you think that the powers of these bodies could be extended, so far as you know?—Yes, I do. I might say in this connection that most of my answers will be conditional, and might imply a state of things which do not exist at present. In fact, I would prefer to give my views on this point in committee, when the Press is not present. But I hold, quite apart from debatable matter, that Education Boards should control all local education of what kind soever.

24. That is practically primary, technical, and secondary?—Yes. I assume if they did that they would be popularly elected.

25. *The Chairman.*] Do you mean on a special franchise, or on what is known as the parliamentary one?—I believe in only one franchise for everything in the country. Therefore I naturally mean the parliamentary franchise. That is a general statement. I do not say that they should have all the powers in relation to secondary schools.

26. Do you mean that you would not transfer to them the same power of appointment of teachers that you would give to the primary schools?—I do not think I should.

27. *Mr. Pirani.*] Why not?—I should like them to prove that they were competent before I handed over the powers.

28. Cannot you get proof in Wanganui, where you have the secondary institution solely under the Board of Education?—Yes, as the governing body of the institution, and, if Mr. Pirani will allow me to say so, I do not think that any evil results whatever have come from it.

29. *The Chairman.*] Would not the tendency be in that direction if it were recognized there was a great responsibility attaching to the elector to return men charged with that higher duty?—I think it very likely. I think that is very likely to be so in Wanganui now. What I feel is that, if it came to a question of legislation, it is best to give powers cautiously, and extend those powers afterwards, than it is to give too much power at first, and then try to call it back. It is only caution; it is not disbelief that they may not be able to do it.

30. Would you qualify it by saying a gradual extension?—Yes. There is one thing I think you must not interfere with—in regard to primary as well as secondary schools—with the teacher's methods, or as to how he shall teach the subjects he teaches. That is a most important thing. There is more danger of this, I think, in the secondary schools.

31. You would allow full play to individuality?—Yes, whatever you do. In the secondary schools and in the technical schools there is something to be gained from the freedom in the arrangement of subjects which should be in the hands of the teacher. The arrangement of subjects in a school is partly in the hands of the Boards by the nature of the appointments they make. If you appoint a number of teachers to a school, and not one can take botany, you thereby cut out the teaching of botany in that school. The questions of appointment and management are not distinct. I think you must allow full freedom of the arrangement of the work of the school, and full freedom of the arrangement of the work of the teacher and his methods. If you can secure that, then I think the local body is perfectly justified in saying what courses of study the schools shall take up.

32. *Mr. Pirani.*] Whilst on secondary schools, do you not think it would be advisable to have a scheme of classification of teachers, and for payment of teachers, in the same way as in the