

112. Speaking of free books, do the pupils in your class provide themselves with their own books?—Standard VI has just been reached by that system this year, and in my class the parents of the children provided the books in the ordinary way at the beginning of this year, and after these books had been provided by their parents a large consignment of free books of various kinds was delivered to us. Some of these, at all events, have simply been put into the cupboard, and stored away for next year's requirements. I cannot use all the books that the children have in their own possession and all the books provided by the Department, but next year the pupils will not be required to provide their own, but will be required to use those provided.

113. Is it not a fact that even in the classes below Standard VI, where books have been provided free for some years, that in the cupboards of these rooms will be found many books that are supplied for use, but are not used because the children buy their own books?—To my knowledge, I do not know of any such case.

114. It has been stated that as a result of the free-book system at least 85 per cent. of the children in the Dominion provided themselves with books prescribed for use, and that it simply means the booksellers and publishers are putting out nearly double the number of books?—I am not aware that the percentage is anything like that.

115. Take the arithmetic books, for instance: would you advise your pupils to purchase books of their own, so that they might study their work at home as well as in school?—I do not know that I should advise them to buy books if similar books have been provided by the Department, on the ground of putting them to needless expense, but I should very much prefer that the Department should not grant arithmetic-books, and that the children should provide their own.

116. As to the unnecessary multiplicity of small schools, how would you remedy the evil?—The only possible way that has occurred to us is that in districts where the scheme is practicable, some of these smaller schools, which are taught usually by a comparatively inefficient teacher, should be closed absolutely, and the children should be conveyed to some central school where there is, we will say, one efficient teacher and a duly qualified assistant, so that instead of having, say, three or four schools with an average attendance of twenty each, you would have one school with an average attendance of sixty or eighty, and where we may naturally expect the teaching would be much more efficient. The cost would be less, too.

117. Have you compared the percentage of sole-teacher schools in New Zealand with the percentage of such schools in the Australian States?—No, I do not know the comparison.

118. We find that 61 per cent. of the schools in New Zealand are sole-teacher schools: are you surprised at the number?—No, I am not surprised.

119. The advocates of the consolidation of the country schools claim that punctuality and regularity in attendance, the general health of the pupils, the moral tone of the pupils, and the efficiency of the teaching are improved: is that your opinion?—It is with respect to most of these matters you mention. I do not see how the health can be very much affected in either way, nor perhaps the moral tone.

120. In country districts children frequently have to travel far. They come to school in wintry weather very often in wet clothes, and if instead of having to walk this distance they were conveyed in vans, as they are in many parts of America, they would reach the school dry and comfortable: would that not improve their health?—I do not think so, necessarily. I think you are overstating the case. I am thinking of two schools three miles apart. One school is to be closed, and the vans must start from somewhere near where that small school stands. The children who originally attended that school would still have a considerable distance of country to cover through the rain or mud to that van centre before they could get into it, and they would be carried to the central school wet, and not dry.

121. *The Chairman.*] Is that a fair assumption? Is not rather the plan that the children are called for at their home, no matter where it is, within reason?—In the case I am thinking of they would have to walk, because they could not be reached by 'bus.

122. *Mr. Davidson.*] I am just now thinking of an instance in America where those who have studied the question give absolute proof that that was so as to the moral tone improving. Is it not likely that children going to and from school are more likely to be contaminated than if they were conveyed in fairly large numbers?—It would be the case, but I should not be disposed to lay very much stress upon that.

123. Regarding the present syllabus, head teachers have the right to make out their own programmes of work for every class in the school and in every subject: is not the present syllabus more suggestive than mandatory?—So we teachers understand it.

124. Then, the objections that have been raised in many parts of the Dominion are mainly on account of the interpretation by Inspectors of that syllabus?—That is so.

125. As to the new regulations for the examination and classification of teachers: have you read the requirements for the teachers' D certificate in elementary hygiene and first aid?—I do not think I have read all that in detail, but I know pretty well the work. I have gone through it.

126. It has been stated that there are no fewer than two hundred topics in that one subject?—I have heard that stated.

127. Do you consider the requirements in that particular subject excessive?—That, of course, must be taken in connection with the question of the importance of that one subject compared with the other subjects in which the candidate has to sit. Considered as a subject by itself, the requirements there may not be excessive, but the possible time required from the student might be excessive.

128. Have the difficulties been greatly increased by making that subject compulsory, and by also making the subject of elementary mathematics for men compulsory, as compared with the old requirements?—I have no doubt that it has had that effect. With respect to the elementary hygiene, first aid, and so on, if this is simply an addition to the previous requirements it undoubtedly has added very considerably to the work. I know roughly the amount of work required there, and it is very considerable.