

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Arthur William de Brito Savile, Earl of Liverpool, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Member of the Royal Victorian Order, Governor and Commander in Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by your Excellency's Letters Patent of the 19th day of April, 1915, by which we were directed to make inquiry into the matter indicated below in accordance with section 13 of the Education Act, 1914, namely, "That there shall not be less than seven nor more than nine education districts, and that such districts shall be determined on the report of a Commission set up on that behalf, which report shall state the name and chief town of each education district and the counties and other areas included therein," have the honour to report as follows:—

For the purpose of obtaining evidence on the matter committed to us we communicated with the Department of Education, all the Boards of Education, the New Zealand Educational Institute, and certain persons directly interested in the matter under inquiry. We also caused advertisements to be inserted in the newspapers circulating in the localities we proposed to visit, inviting any one desirous of giving evidence to appear before us. Sittings were held at Wellington, Invercargill, Dunedin, Timaru, Christchurch, Nelson, Blenheim, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Auckland, Hamilton, and Napier, the meetings being held with open doors whenever evidence was heard. Twenty-seven sittings were held, and ninety-eight witnesses were examined, including the Director of Education, representatives of Education Boards, of School Committees, and of District Educational Institutes; members of Parliament, Inspectors of Schools, and other persons interested. Written statements were received from a number of witnesses who were unable to attend the sittings of the Commission, in particular from representatives of the Education Boards of Westland and Grey. In addition, the evidence given to the Education Commission of 1912, together with that taken by the Education Committee of the House of Representatives in 1914, was treated as evidence given to this Commission. The evidence given during our inquiry is attached hereto. (Appendix IV.) No evidence bearing on the matter was declined, and we are of opinion that the information obtained is as complete as could reasonably be looked for.

In determining the number of education districts and delimiting their boundaries we have kept in view the following principal considerations:—

- (1.) The provision of a sound financial position for the several education districts, so that the various activities of the Boards can be carried on without undue strain.
- (2.) Convenience of local administration from the centre, in such matters as the provision, maintenance, and supervision of buildings and other school properties.
- (3.) Making the districts large enough to allow of full provision for the various branches of technical education bearing on the industries predominantly carried on in the several parts of each district, more especially for those bearing on such rural industries as dairying, fruit-culture, and general mixed farming.
- (4.) Associating with the most populous centres—which have numerous urban and suburban schools of the highest grades—correspondingly large rural areas.
- (5.) The provision, as far as possible, of an equally favourable unbroken ladder of promotion for the teachers in all the education districts, the effect of which would be to give increased efficiency of teaching with consequent benefit to the pupils.

There are districts in which some one or other of the objects set forth above cannot be as fully realized as we could wish, but even in these cases the remaining advantages, in our opinion, amply compensate for the defects.