

## Notes

### An Anglican Bishop's Testimony

Some weeks ago a cable message in the daily papers made intimation of the fact that the Anglican Bishop of Auckland just prior to leaving on his return journey to the Dominion had contributed an interesting letter to the London *Times* containing damaging strictures on our New Zealand education system. The full text of the communication is now to hand, and, as a testimony to the evil influence of our secular system and a vindication of the absolute necessity of religion in the schools, the utterance is one which well deserves to be placed on permanent record. Bishop Neligan writes:—

'There appear to be to-day in England three schools of thought about the education question. Broadly speaking, they may be described thus:

1. The secularists.
2. The men who say "All we want is secularism." These men are churchmen on one side and Nonconformists on the other.
3. The advocates of a fair and honorable compromise, which shall preserve both in theory and fact true religious equality.

'Had it not been for my over-sea experience, I should have been inclined to advocate the cause of the second group of men. But that experience has, I hope, taught me something. That something is—secularism is educationally false, morally bad for a nation, fraught with disaster. To the men who advocate secularism as the only, or the alternative, solution of the present difficulties at Home, I would venture to say: Avoid this issue by any honorable means in your power; my experience in "the Britain of the Pacific" makes me view with horror the possibility of secular State schools in England. Very many teachers in the State schools of New Zealand long to be allowed to teach religion; the greater number of Nonconformists in that country, as well as of Anglicans, are gravely apprehensive of the results of secular State schools. Concerning a compromise, may I add this: Religion only exists in the provided schools to-day because it is and has always been the characteristic feature of the non-provided schools. Religion will not long remain in any State school if denominational schools are starved out. Denominational schools give a standard for religious instruction; other schools give a reasonably fair civic approximation to that standard; more cannot be expected of citizen schools. Therefore, the compromise, while quite fairly demanding some measure of denominational support for denominational schools, must also provide those schools with funds from the Imperial exchequer sufficient to save them from becoming inefficient in other educational respects.

'It is estimated that there are to-day in New Zealand about one-third of the children of school age—roughly, 50,000 out of 160,000—who are outside any religious instruction. That is a serious fact for the State and for all religious bodies to face in that young nation. It is largely the result of State secular schools.

'In New Zealand religious instruction may be given out of school hours. "Facilities" of this kind are useless. Religious instruction must be as normal as any other instruction; otherwise God becomes an "extra" in a child's mind. That must spell, sooner or later, moral loss to a nation.

'May the mother of nations, at this time, be guided to teach her daughter nations that religion in the schools is necessary to the moral health of the State.'

From the foregoing it is evident that so far as general principles are concerned Bishop Neligan sees practically eye to eye with ourselves as to the lines along which the true solution of the education question must come. And if his Lordship has any following at all among his people—and, considering his office, it is impossible to suppose that he stands alone—it is further evident that on this question of religious education Catholics have more allies throughout the country than they have been wont to imagine.

### The Teachers' Parliament

The session of the New Zealand Educational Institute just concluded was, from the point of view of the public, decidedly more interesting than many of the previous annual gatherings of that body. Having at last, after long fighting, secured the enactment of a colonial scale of salaries, a colonial staffing scale, and a satisfactory superannuation scheme, the teachers were able to turn away for a little from what may be called the 'bread and butter' aspect of their profession and devote some attention to questions more intimately connected with their actual

teaching work. The topics discussed were of a very varied nature, and the debates for the most part reached the high level that would naturally be expected from such a gathering. As might have been anticipated, the syllabus bulked very largely in the discussions, and the necessity for further revision and for a further easing off of the burdens imposed on the unfortunate youngsters was very clearly established. The two points emphasised were the crying need for a more uniform interpretation of the syllabus on the part of inspectors and the desirableness of a modification of the present requirements in arithmetic and geography. As regards the former, one has only to read the annual reports of the inspectors to see that the teachers have a real grievance. Let us take, for example, the subject of arithmetic. We find one inspector—evidently somewhat of a theorist—laying it down that mechanical accuracy in working out problems is a matter of entirely secondary importance, and if the pupil has an intelligent knowledge of methods, that is really all that is required. A little further on in the same volume of reports we find another—apparently of a more practical turn—pointing out that when the boy leaves school and goes into an office his employer will not care a straw whether he has 'an intelligent knowledge of methods' if his computations are inaccurate and unreliable; that in such a case the boy will probably earn instant dismissal; and that for his part, he (the inspector) will attach prime importance in this subject to accuracy and correctness in working out actual results. It is obviously unfair that teachers should be left at the mercy of such conflicting interpretations, and it is in no way matter for surprise that a remit to the effect that the inspectors of the Dominion should be placed under the control of the Central Department with respect to the interpretation of the regulations of the syllabus should have been unanimously adopted by the conference.

With regard to the necessity for a further modification of the syllabus, especially in the matter of mathematical geography, the members of the institute who moved in that direction had little difficulty in making out a good case. Here are some of the specimens—cited by the teachers—of questions on the geography paper prepared for the proficiency certificate examination (i.e., for Sixth Standard pupils) of 1908 at Auckland:

'By what marks could we distinguish a moraine deposit from a river or fluvial deposit?' 'Though the earth turns 366 times on its axis in a year, we have only 365 days in the year—how is this?' 'Why do we believe that the position of the earth's axis is approximately stable?' 'Many inland plains in the South Island were once large lake basins—what evidence can be given in proof of this?'

These questions speak for themselves, and the Auckland teacher hardly overstated the case who described them bluntly as 'a disgrace.'

Amongst the proposals submitted to the conference was one which, in our judgment, did not receive at the hands of members anything like the attention which its importance deserved. We refer to the resolution moved by Mr. J. Aitken (Wanganui) suggesting that the present method of electing members to seats on Education Boards be abolished, and that there be substituted therefor a method which would make members of boards amenable to public suffrage. At present the members of boards are elected by the school committees, each member of committee having one vote; under the method proposed in the Wanganui remit every householder in the district would have a vote, and candidates for a seat would require to come before the public and give some statement of their position and views. Although the payment of teachers' salaries and the administration of the building grants have been removed from the control of the boards, they are still invested with very large powers indeed. According to the Education Act, they have power to establish and maintain public schools within their district; to promote the establishment of school districts within such district and define the limits thereof; to appoint and remove teachers, inspectors, and other officers; to establish scholarships, school libraries, and district high schools; to arrange for the conveyance of children to and from school; to raise the moneys required to be raised for the purposes of the Act, and to administer the funds granted by the Education Department and all other funds which may become the property of the board. Seeing that the powers of committees have been reduced practically to the vanishing point, and that the boards now have in their hands virtually the sole administration of education interests in their respective provinces, it is reasonable to ask that they should be elected by a rather more enlarged constituency than that comprised by the good men and true who are found willing to discharge the thankless duties of school committeemen. Owing to the absence of direct responsibility to the public, there is, especially