

N.Z. CATHOLIC FEDERATION

DOMINION COUNCIL HALF-YEARLY MEETING.

As briefly mentioned in last week's issue of the *Tablet*, the delegates to the Dominion Council, at the conclusion of Solemn High Mass in St. Joseph's Cathedral, Dunedin, on Wednesday, March 5, assembled in St. Joseph's Hall, Rattray Street, for the half-yearly meeting. The gathering was welcomed by the Very Rev. J. Coffey, diocesan administrator, who wished the meeting success, and outlined the plans made by the Dunedin Diocesan Council for the entertainment of the visitors.

The president (Mr. Poppelwell) also expressed his pleasure at the representative meeting present. Mr. Poppelwell referred to the severe loss the diocese of Dunedin had sustained in the death of Bishop Verdon, a man of quiet, studious turn of mind, but one ever mindful of the needs of his Church and people. He spoke also of the many vacant places amongst the clergy and laity since the visit of the influenza. The sympathy of the council would go out to the relatives of those who had suffered, and the admiration of all would be accorded those noble priests, nuns, laymen, and women who in time of trial gave freely of their services and time in attending the sick. The scheme propounded by the Federation for scholarships, to be available in each diocese, had taken practical shape, and the first of these scholarships had been awarded this year. It was to be regretted that a determined effort was being made in certain quarters to deprive Catholic pupils of their right to obtain proficiency certificates, and Government employment. This cry for a monopoly of education by the State was surely a sign of a decadence of the idea of liberty which used to be the proud boast of the citizens of the British Empire.

The report of the Dominion Executive, which was discussed in detail, showed satisfactory progress. The work of the field service fund of the Federation, which has raised a very large sum during the war for the benefit of soldiers in the Dominion and abroad, was referred to at length, and considerable satisfaction was expressed at the work performed, which has been highly appreciated by the soldiers, and by the chaplains who have administered the funds. As the work of caring for the soldiers abroad, and in hospital in New Zealand, will continue for some time to come, the question of closing the activities of the Federation in regard to this work was deferred for future consideration. Attention was directed to the good work done by the hostels for girls in the larger centres, which are partly controlled by the several diocesan councils of the Federation, and this work was commended. The need for the formation of energetic immigration committees to assist the many persons who will arrive when shipping is available was urged, and the councils were directed to take action. During the half year a message was received from his Holiness the Pope, imparting to the Dominion Council and members the Apostolic Benediction. Reference was made to arrangements made with the English Vigilance Association to obtain corrections of mis-statements appearing in the English press, in connection with matters affecting the Church generally. These corrections were authoritative, and should be of service in the Dominion. The executive placed on record its deep sense of thankfulness to Almighty God that the end of the great war had come. To those who had suffered and to the relatives of the fallen most heartfelt sympathy was extended. The principal discussion centred on the question of the educational policy of the Catholic body. After the matter had been gone into it was agreed that the Dominion Executive interview the hierarchy as soon as possible, and take action as is deemed necessary. The matter of uniform scholarship examinations was also considered very carefully, and eventually it was decided to convene a conference of teachers to arrange a uniform scheme. Most satisfactory reports were received of progress in the various dioceses. In most cases the membership has already exceeded that of previous years, despite the difficulties attendant upon the epidemic, etc.

Most hearty thanks were accorded the Very Rev. Father J. Liston for his admirable and instructive address at the Cathedral during Mass. It was decided that the address be printed and circulated.

MASSED MEETING IN DUNEDIN.

There was a great assemblage in His Majesty's Theatre, Dunedin, on last Thursday evening, on the occasion of a massed meeting, organised by the Dunedin Diocesan Council of the Catholic Federation. Grouped on the stage were the various speakers, the movers and seconders of resolutions, and delegates who attended the Dominion Council conference on the previous day. The Very Rev. J. Coffey (diocesan administrator) presided, and in addressing the gathering, said the council of the Catholic Federation had been meeting in Dunedin during the past two days, and it had been considered that it would be a good opportunity for members to give addresses with a view of pointing out what the Catholic Federation had been called into existence for, which was not for any sinister purpose or secret motive, but merely to voice the opinion of Catholics on social, religious, and educational questions. It had been known for years that the Catholics in the Dominion were suffering under what they considered was a gross injustice in the educational system, and an effort had been made lately to withdraw from them the privileges they had received. It had been thought that the time had come to put before the public the grievances of the Catholics and what was demanded by them.

The first of the selected speakers was the Very Rev. Dean Burke, who said:—

My subject is the necessity of religious and moral education in schools. The education of youth has been at all times held as of the greatest importance. Never was it of more importance than in our days of democratic rule, of government of the people by the people for the people. If the people would govern well they should be fitted to do so by virtue and intelligence. All, then, desire the best education that can be given.

In these countries, three attitudes are taken up in this matter. First, there is that of atheists, agnostics, pantheists, positivists, and so on. Again, there is a large class of people, adherents of various Christian denominations who agree largely with those consistent secularists. In the third place stand all Catholics and, I should hope, very many Protestants, who have decided views as to the place of religion and morals in the processes of education.

The first class, caring nothing for the Christian religion, exclude it from their school system. But admitting the necessity of moral training, they say with Herbert, that "the school discipline and instruction in the common branches are adequate means for developing the moral character." They add that the example of teachers and parents, contact with companions, and the conventions of our civilised society, with the policeman standing behind the crowd and overseeing all, will make a law-abiding, respectable citizen—a man who will keep out of gaol! And what more do you want?

The second class agree with the true secularists in shutting out religion from the schools. They do so for one reason or another—expediency, convenience, cheapness, avoidance of difficulties. They would leave religion and morals mostly to the home and the Sunday school. They forget how little can be done in an hour in the week by the Sunday school, and how little is done in so many homes through inability, want of time, fatigue, and indifference. Joe Bindle expresses briefly but fairly well the attitude of this large and easy-going class. "Not as I've anythink to say agin' religion and morals, provided they are kep' for Sundays and Good Friday, an' don't get mixed up wi' the rest of the week!"

The third class hold that religion and morals (with them religion and morals are largely identical) should be pre-eminent at all times in human life—and most particularly during the time of early education, when character is being formed. Instruction and training should go together. Why this pre-eminence and due co-ordination? Because the aim of education is to fit man to reach his destiny. Where does it lie? "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Justice." "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and