

me on matters connected with the League's scheme and my attitude thereon, and by my answers thereto; (c) the time limit and the point of order provisions (as above) to apply to both parties.' Bishop Cleary added that he would do his own questioning unaided; while the League was invited to put on as many of its picked men as it liked to question him.

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To this the secretary of the Wanganui League sent a palpably evasive reply, intimating that 'his Committee felt that the proposition as submitted by the Bishop was one to be made to the Executive in Wellington, and that their arrangements with Dr. Gibb were already completed.' The Very Rev. Dean Holley, S.M., through whom the correspondence on both sides was conducted, then addressed a pointed letter to the local League secretary, in which he remarked that 'in consideration of Bishop Cleary's demonstrative earnestness to meet the Rev. Dr. Gibb fairly and squarely, on the occasion of his lecture, it seems to me that his request embodied in his long telegram is just and reasonable,' and asked the secretary to again bring the matter under the consideration of his Committee. The tenor of the telegram referred to, which followed immediately on the heels of the letters above summarised, was that Bishop Cleary was prepared to deal either with the local Committee or with the Wellington Executive, that as the lecturer was then in Wellington and was a member of the Executive he would have no difficulty in seeing the matter through, and asking that a reply be sent at the local Committee's earliest convenience. The secretary replied, declining to call a special meeting of his Committee to consider Bishop Cleary's wire; and finally, on July 28, wrote again, intimating that the Committee 'could not alter the decision already arrived at'—which was, in effect, to run away from both of Bishop Cleary's offers—and that 'as far as they were concerned the matter must now be considered closed.'

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A very telling letter from Bishop Cleary followed; but the matter even then was by no means 'closed.' Dr. Gibb's meeting duly eventuated on July 31; and although, as we are informed, extraordinary and by no means creditable measures had been adopted to secure that the so-called 'public' meeting should be 'packed' with League supporters, the speaker encountered no small degree of opposition in the course of his remarks. As to the tone and spirit of the lecture, they were, in so far as the references to Bishop Cleary and to Catholics are concerned, what the public have now, unfortunately, learned to expect from Dr. Gibb—uncouth, ill-tempered, bitter, and to the last degree undignified. To interjectors he could reply with nothing better than that 'he would like them to shut their mouths and cultivate some sense.' We quote a sample sentence from the lecture: 'He remarked with some sarcasm that Dr. Cleary was an ardent supporter of liberty. A lot had been heard of the Catholic conscience. What about the Presbyterian conscience and the Anglican conscience? The Roman Catholics wanted the children taught as they desired. Who are the Roman Catholics?' the speaker asked. The Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Salvation Army represented 750,000 people of the population, and the Roman Catholics represented 14 per cent. of the community. Are those four bodies to be tyrannised by Roman Catholics? He said No! The League was going to have its way.' But it was at question time that Dr. Gibb's discomfiture and humiliation were made complete. We quote from the full, and, on the whole, very fair report given by the *Wanganui Chronicle*. 'In response to the Mayor's application for questions, Mr. Whiting put the following:—"Can the rev. lecturer inform the audience whether the Bible-in-Schools League is sincere in asking for relevant questions to be put here to-night? Is he aware that Bishop Cleary has been in correspondence with the local branch of the League for the past seven or eight days with the object in view of being permitted to put questions at his meeting, and that he requested the observance of the two conditions of ordinary debate, point of order

and of the time-limit in replying to questions, that his sole object in doing so was to elicit direct and concise answers which would be of real benefit to the public as between one expert and another, and that his perfectly legitimate and reasonable request was not entertained?" Answer: "Who is the Bishop," the lecturer asked, "that he should be specially treated." Question: "Is the rev. lecturer prepared to accept the offer of Bishop Cleary which I am authorised to make on his behalf to debate the question publicly on any platform in the Dominion?" Answer: "I stand for truth, not for casuistry." Question: "Is the rev. lecturer aware that anticipating a crowded and mixed audience, an advertisement appeared in the *Herald* of last and of this evening, inviting supporters to be at the stage door at 7 p.m. punctually, and a local in last evening's *Herald* warning all sympathisers to be in their seats early, and that two of the doors were not open to the general public until 7.30 p.m., and if he is aware of this, does he not regard it as a studied attempt to stifle discussion and adverse voting." Answer: "I was not aware of it." The speaker explained that he had had experiences of Dr. Cleary before. He was not afraid. He knew Dr. Cleary's methods, and had not the time to embark in the endless business.'

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These answers require no comments. They speak eloquently for themselves; and in all the history of public movements and meetings in New Zealand we cannot recall a case in which a prominent public man has placed himself in such a pitiable plight. By the kind courtesy of the Editors, the whole of the correspondence between Bishop Cleary and the Wanganui League was printed in both the local papers in the same issue in which the report of Dr. Gibb's lecture appeared—an act of justice and journalistic fair play which reflects the greatest credit on the Wanganui press. Any moral effect that might have attached to the lecture was thus completely destroyed by the telling exposure of the evasive and shirking methods adopted by the League. We understand that a similar and even more complete *débâcle* occurred at Hawera, regarding which we will probably have particulars later. Both at Wanganui and at Hawera the League found it prudent to contradict the original announcement of the lecture as a 'reply to Bishop Cleary.' It is not a pleasant business to have to thus force humiliation upon the Bible-in-schools advocates, but it is obviously the best way of making the League's persistent shirking manifest to the public, and of pillorying its scandalous misrepresentations of Bishop Cleary and other opponents, especially in that shameful and now notorious League leaflet, entitled 'Methods of Opposition.' A few more such public exposures and collapses will probably convince the Executive that a very effective remedy has been found against that grave public scandal, and that from policy if not from principle, its better course is once and for all to abandon its practice of 'playing tricks with truth,' as the Rev. J. H. Mackenzie, clerk of the Presbyterian General Assembly, gently puts it.

Notes

Held Over

Owing to exceptional pressure on our space a quantity of matter, including comments on Catholic Federation meeting, is unavoidably held over.

A Teacher's Viewpoint

We have pleasure in reproducing and drawing attention to the following admirable letter, contributed by Mr. James Aitken, head master of the Victoria Avenue State School, Wanganui, to the *Wanganui Chronicle* of August 1. Mr. Aitken's communication is all the more weighty in that that gentleman is not only head master of the largest public school in Wanganui but is also a prominent Presbyterian Church worker and Sunday School teacher. Under the heading 'Bible in Schools,' Mr. Aitken writes: 'Sir,—It is with much pain and regret that I find myself unable

S. F. ABURN

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