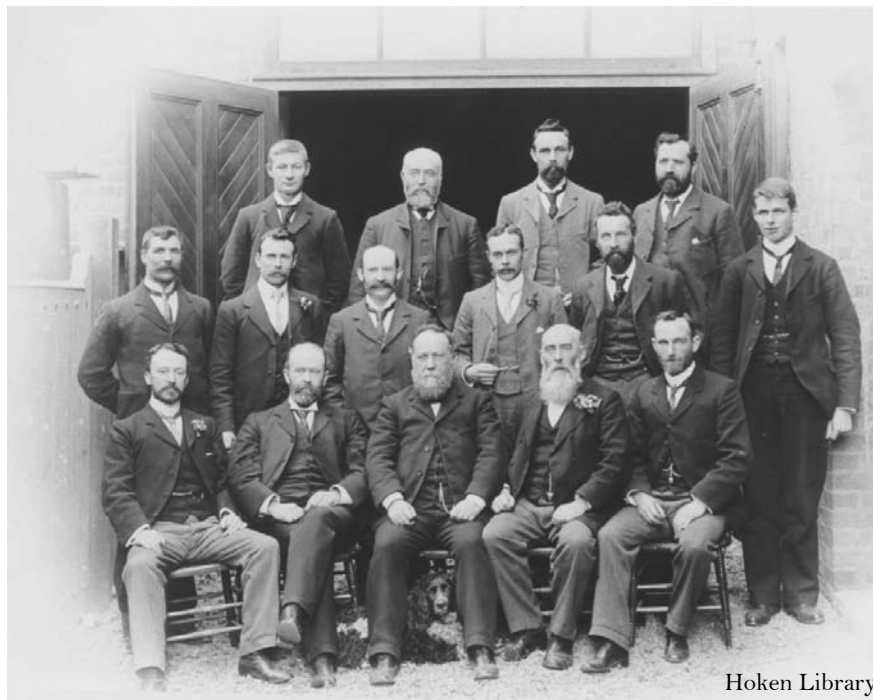


***Let Battle Commence***  
***A study of the Otago Education Board***  
***1877-1899***

**David McKenzie**  
***University of Otago***

***Otago Education Board Staff and Inspectors [ca 1910]***



Taken at the entrance to His Majesty's Theatre, formerly offices of OEB.

Back row: R.J. Foreman, R.L. Aitken, James Rodger (architect), W. Eudey  
Second row: John Hanna, A.G. Melville, S.M. Park, R. Armstrong, Colin Macandrew,  
James Miller  
Front row: C.R. Bossence, P. Goyen, Patrick. G. Pryde (Sec), W.S Fitzgerald,  
C.R. Richardson

# ***Education Research and Perspectives***

***Vol. 35, No. 1, June, 2008***

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## *Editorial*

This is the second occasion when the journal *Education Research and Perspectives* has devoted a full issue to the publication of a doctoral thesis. The author, Dr David McKenzie, has long been recognised as one of New Zealand's leading educational historians. Born in Wellington in 1936, he was educated at Wellington College and the Victoria University of Wellington where he graduated MA (hons) & Dip.Ed. in 1962. He started out in life as a primary school teacher and later taught at the Police Training School in Wellington before embarking upon an academic career as a lecturer in Education at the University of Canterbury in 1964. He moved to the University of Otago in 1968 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1980. Between 1985 and 1989 he edited the New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies. Always a keen participant in university politics, he also served as President of the Otago branch of the NZ Association of University Teachers and subsequently became Dean of Arts and Music at Otago (1987-89). Thereafter he served for a further five years as Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Humanities) before taking early retirement in 1994.

I first met David McKenzie when he lectured to me as a student at Canterbury University in the early 1960s and later had the privilege of teaching alongside him at Otago in the early 1970s. Always the wily politician and quintessential scholar, I have long cherished our enduring friendship and the many lessons about university life that he taught me.

David McKenzie completed his PhD in 1973 when he was a Senior Lecturer. Over the years I have read a variety of doctoral theses which deserved to be published but which for a variety of reasons have never seen the light of day. David's thesis was a case in point. In the past two decades administration has become a central focus in the study of education, especially in relation to attempts to decentralise control and to apply economic rationalist concepts involving the role of the market in parental choice of schooling and school accountability. Most educational bureaucrats responsible for implementing the latter-day changes have shown little or no interest in the legacy of past educational history and the lessons to be learnt from previous attempts to introduce changes in the way schools are organised and what they teach. In the early years of the last century, for example, when teacher training was established at the London Day Training College, it would have been unthinkable to suggest that trainee teachers should not be given a detailed understanding of the history of English education in order that

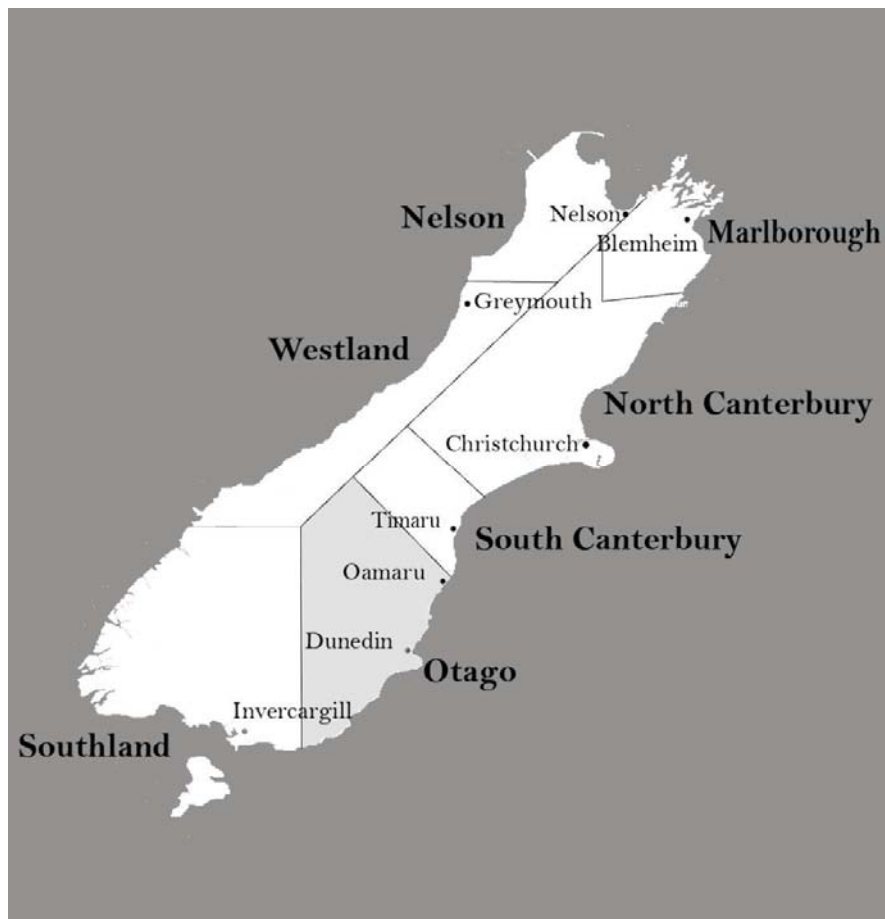
they might be aware of how the system of public schools had come into existence and their principal objectives. Sadly, the history of education and the lessons to be learned from it are now frequently considered to be irrelevant to the modern world. I firmly believe that a reading of David McKenzie's thesis will not only prove a worthwhile experience in its own right but also highlight the importance of understanding the lessons of the past if politicians and their officials are not to repeat past errors. It is noteworthy that the late Dr C.E.Beeby, New Zealand's world famous Director of Education for two decades (1940-60), who was trained initially as an educational psychologist, was forever conscious that it was essential for educational administrators to understand the lessons of educational history if they were to have any hope of implementing worthwhile and enduring reforms in schools.

This issue of the journal presents a slightly amended version of the original thesis. A completely new introductory chapter has been written to justify the publication of a thesis written over thirty years ago, and the final chapter has also been reduced in length. No photo of the Otago Education Board in the period covered by the thesis (1877-99) was procurable but one of the Board *circa* 1910 was obtained from the Hocken Library in Dunedin. It includes in the centre of the front row, Patrick G.Pryde, the Board's long-serving Secretary/Treasurer, who figures prominently throughout the thesis. To his right is the School Inspector, P.Goyen, his equally long-serving brother-in-law, whose appointment generated vociferous claims of nepotism.

Readers are advised that the December issue of the journal will be a general one including a variety of articles.

CLIVE WHITEHEAD  
Editor

*Diagram of the South Island showing  
approximate boundaries of the Education  
Boards post 1877*



## ***Chapter 1***

### ***Introduction***

The research in this essay was completed over 34 years ago. Inevitably the standpoint from which it was written has altered with the passage of time. No one then, for example, could have predicted the strength of the monetarist philosophy which was to sweep western education systems in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. New Zealand underwent a radical restructuring of its educational administration following the publication of the Picot Report<sup>1</sup> in 1989; much of the driving force for change coming from sources which had little sensitivity to the subtleties of educational policy and no regard whatsoever for the way in which educational developments had evolved over generations in response to community demand. Instead of viewing the status quo as a working product of the past, action-oriented critics now held that history was a bothersome thing best replaced by managerial theory which, if correctly applied, would produce an efficient system of national education that fitted the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Much was made of the 'new dawn' which heralded changes embracing parents, teachers and education bureaucrats alike. Less noticed, however, were the modifications which the recently arrived movers and shakers soon had to make in order to accommodate their policies to the realities of providing public schooling in a small society fiercely attached to an egalitarian myth. Thus it is that in the end, those who advocate historical changes in New Zealand schooling have been forced to respond to the cumulative beliefs, achievements and failures which constitute the nation's education story.

The research in this essay which covers the founding years of the Otago Education Board, demonstrates how educational policy achievements, disappointments and outright failures were experienced in what at that time was the most populous province in New Zealand and the heartland of its mercantile life. What is presented here is a detailed account of the way in which the Otago Education Board went about its business in the period 1877-1900. The research seeks to show what the Board learned as a statutory provider of public schooling in Otago, how and why its attitudes and policies changed over that period, and how the board contributed to national policy development as well as

being a servant of regional needs. It is not a simplistic story of rise to greatness. Often, very often, it is a story of muddle, temper tantrums and disappointment; a story which indeed can be read as a cautionary tale to those persons who are tempted to identify radical discontinuity *per se* as educational progress.

When the New Zealand government introduced its vision of universal schooling in 1877, it did so in circumstances which were startlingly novel. Colonists, *qua* colonists, instinctively looked to their homeland for models of social progress but in the case of national education no such models enshrined in tradition existed. Great Britain had initiated a dual system of public and aided church schooling only seven years previously while closer to home the Australian State of Victoria [a state well-known in Otago] had legislated for public schooling as recently as 1872. New Zealand was therefore very much on its own as it set out to design a system of education that would be free, secular and compulsory - three concepts that were not familiar to most settlers and most decidedly unfamiliar to the indigenous Maori population. The issue of 'secularity' attracted much of the contentious public and parliamentary debate in 1877 but in practice it subsequently presented few difficulties for education providers like the Otago Education Board. Indeed, by 1900 the Board's Inspectors, at the request of the Catholic Bishop of Dunedin, were examining Catholic schools in the province. The concept of 'free' schooling paid for by taxation on consumables did produce considerable initial anxiety however. In the minds of many people in Otago, the price of democratic schooling came too high if 'nice' children were forced to sit in classrooms alongside the great unwashed who could not be excluded on the grounds of price. But the Education Board never wavered in its determination to maintain the principle of universality; going as far in fact as to admonish publicly those teachers who attempted to exclude children because their clothing was not respectable or because they lacked shoes. More importantly, periodic suggestions throughout much of this period of study that a special school be set up for children with 'bad' habits were consistently rejected by Board members who concluded that such a policy would be 'an everlasting disgrace in a democratic community'.

In England, special schools of this kind were known as 'truant schools' but the truancy issue was one to which there could be no speedy solution in Otago or elsewhere in the country. For very good reason, it was the principle of compulsory school attendance rather than its immediate implementation, that was written into the 1877 Act.

Localities were permitted to invoke the Act's compulsory attendance provisions at a time of their own choosing. This was entirely prudent.

There was no point in compelling attendance until there were sufficient schools and a ready supply of teachers to provide for all school-age children in a given district. These could not be obtained immediately even in relatively wealthy provinces like Otago where, prior to 1877, fewer than half the child population had attended school. In the longer run however, the more persistent problem for the Otago Education Board during these years was the conflict created between compulsory school attendance and family economies and ideological preferences. Finally, the Board learned, along with everyone else, that other legislative initiatives [e.g. Factory Acts] which removed children from sectors of the employment market, made compulsory attendance easier to enforce. Gradually it became accepted in the community that children should be in school. Nevertheless it was as late as 1900 before it could fairly be said that the compulsory clauses of the 1877 Act had come to operate effectively throughout Otago.

The 1877 Act was an attempt to resolve four broad questions which national education systems require to be answered. First, how will the schools be financed? Second, how will the schools be governed? Third, how will the teachers be appointed and judged? And fourth, how will the work of the schools [i.e. pupil behaviour and academic progress] be accounted? The legislators in 1877 agreed that all future major finance for public schooling would come from government loans and revenue; the system of financing New Zealand education which remains in force today. It was a solution that made sense in a small colonial society with a widely scattered population that often possessed limited means of self-help. In 1877, however, it was a solution which was far from being equitable when it came to addressing the needs of the poorest communities in the country. A system of allocating schooling finance to the several regions [in large part the old provincial districts prior to 1876] had immediately to be devised and the politically expedient means settled upon was to pay in accord with the numbers presently enrolled and attending schools on a daily basis throughout the nation. This system, colloquially known as the 'bums-on seats' system, is still the essence of the country's resource allocation today, although now much more discretion is allowed for cases of special need. In 1877 there was no discretion. As it stood, this basis of financing initially favoured relatively prosperous provinces like Otago, but by 1900 the Otago Education Board had come to realise that it was not only a system that



was often too inflexible to meet local needs, but it was also on occasion likely to threaten a Board with bankruptcy if seasonal illnesses decimated the school attendance records. For the time being, however, the quarterly returns of school registers determined the amount of education finance supplied to the respective Education Boards and it was not surprising that falsifying school registers [roll-stuffing] by teachers became a criminal offence. Even as a favoured recipient, the Otago Board finally became convinced that payment strictly on the basis of attendance would not meet the needs of a successful schooling system unless more discretion in allocation were granted to the central authority i.e. the Education Department.

Prior to 1877, public schooling [where it existed] in provincial New Zealand had tended to be left to self-appointed school committees to provide albeit with some financial help from provincial governments. In Otago, this approach had suited the Scottish beliefs of the settlement's founders that the people's schools should be governed by the local people. It was a tradition which the national legislators decided to build upon by placing all public schools in the country under the governance of locally elected school committees; householders [regardless of gender] in each district being entitled to vote. Apart from local fund-raising by means of bottle drives, school fairs and the like, school committees relied on money distributed by Education Boards to pay for such things as caretaking, heating costs and basic school maintenance. There was not a lot to engage public interest here apart from deciding when or if to invoke compulsory school attendance, but the school committees were also empowered by the 1877 Act to be 'consulted' by the Boards about the appointment of teachers to their school. In Otago this was a power which they clung to with the obstinacy of a drowning man clutching at a straw.

Throughout the period under study, the school committees in Otago held firmly to their interpretation that 'consult' meant that they, rather than the Otago Education Board and its officials, would determine who would teach in their respective schools. The Board was defeated over and over again on this issue until by 1900 it had come to the conclusion that in the interests of developing teaching as a professional career, the time had come to devise a national system of appointments and promotion for teachers. What is important to note is that this change in attitude took place in response to lengthy and frustrating experience over many years. It also occurred in spite of the rising collective voice of

primary school teachers in their national union the New Zealand Educational Institute [NZEI], not because of it.

The real strength of the school committees' power lay in their statutory entitlement after 1877 to elect the members of the education boards in their district. It was a power that they used aggressively in Otago to thwart all attempts by the Board to centralise teacher appointments under its auspices and it was a reserve power which rural schools in particular regarded as an assurance that their needs would not be overlooked. It was an assurance that worked. Throughout the period of this study the Board's policies never produced wholesale rural outrage and those who ordained these things always made sure that the several sectors of the Otago district were represented at the Board table. It was a situation which could have produced much internal squabbling in place of public debate and on occasion trivial insults did predominate in the news. But with the founding of the Dunedin City Schools Committee Conference in 1884, came an inspiring example of how a group with no legislative standing could apply pressure for reform in educational policies both at the regional and national level. Under the brilliant leadership of Mark Cohen, the Conference united teachers and parents in proposals for reform; a conjuring which successive governments found difficult to resist even as they do to this day. Although looked at with some suspicion by rural critics, the contribution which the Conference made to Otago education during these years was out of all proportion to its size and its lack of legislative empowerment.

Charles Bowen, the author of the 1877 Act, decreed that it was necessary, if the taxpayer was to get value for money, to ensure that in every part of the country the same standard of public schooling should apply. There was no dispute about this. In a small egalitarian society nobody wished to be told that their 'free' education was not as good as the next person's. In 1878, in order to meet this objective, six successive standards of work were prescribed from the pen of the Reverend Habens, the Inspector-General in the newly created Education Department in Wellington. Each standard was one year's work and those children who passed a test on the prescribed work were able to move on to the next standard. Those who failed were required to do the same prescribed work again for a further year. As such, there was nothing revolutionary about the 'standards' concept. It was a device that had been used in England for more than a decade in what was known as the 'Revised Code' and it was also built into the Victorian Education Act

of 1872. Prior to 1877, most of the provinces in New Zealand had developed curricula based on standards for schools in their jurisdiction and many people were familiar with the concept of a specially employed school inspector travelling around the district schools and examining children on a standards syllabus. A syllabus of prescribed knowledge is not of course a non-contentious matter. What is in the syllabus is 'legitimate' knowledge. What is left out is either inferred to be unimportant or declared to be 'dangerous'. When put together with the concept of compulsory schooling, fears were expressed that he who controlled the syllabus and inspected the schools could control the classrooms and thereby shape the minds of the next generation in a mould of his choosing. The legislative solution to this perceived dilemma in 1877 was to divide the control of the task. The Inspector-General was required to prescribe the national standards syllabus but the schools were to be inspected by officers appointed by the respective education boards; inspectors who had no right of formal communication with the Inspector-General in Wellington. The result in Otago and elsewhere was nothing less than an educational catastrophe which cast its shadow over the whole period under review. The Inspector-General had no particular incentive to change any of his syllabus prescriptions and while the school inspectors in the several districts could and did criticise syllabus prescriptions, they never had to own responsibility for those same prescriptions. A better system for retarding schooling development and reform would have been harder to imagine but amazingly, New Zealand's legislators post-Picot decided to do the same thing all over again.

At first the Otago Education Board insisted that the syllabus prescriptions were sacrosanct i.e. a professional matter, and insisted also that its inspectors have no communication with the Inspector-General except through the Board. Having assured itself that its teachers would not be hard pressed because unlike places overseas, teachers in Otago would not be paid on the basis of their classes' examination results, the Board soon found itself using examination results to determine quality. Good teachers were those who got high percentages of their pupils through the examinations; poor teachers were the reverse. Throughout the period under study the Board sought to deal with the educational consequences that flowed from this policy. They earnestly exhorted teachers to stop 'driving and cramming' their pupils; they passed regulations to stop teachers keeping children in after school hours for extra coaching before inspection day; and they suggested to Mr Habens that he make some syllabus reforms to ease the workload of teachers in

small rural schools in particular. But all to no avail. By 1900 the Board had come round to the view that no worthwhile educational advances would be made until the school inspectors became officers of the Education Department in Wellington and the standards examination system was abolished. None of the Otago Education Board members had reputations for being wild radicals but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century its leading spokespersons had come to realise that the future lay in creating a more autonomous teaching profession provided with stronger leadership and responsibility from the central Education Department.

Ironically, it was the very success of the examination system that impeded the way forward for its demise. The legislators in 1877 had regarded a 'standard' as being a minimum public guarantee of schooling quality. Neither they nor the Otago Education Board had imagined that in the eyes of ambitious parents, 'standards' certificates, if sufficiently rare, would soon be seen as credentials for entry to favoured employment opportunities - i.e. what contemporaries called the 'black coat' positions and what would be called today 'white collar employment'. This, along with an employment market with reduced opportunities for child labour, gave rise to the phenomenon of more and more children staying on longer at school throughout the period under review in Otago and elsewhere. In one sense this was good news for the Otago Board's income but in another it meant that any reform of the examination/credentialling system was fraught with suspicion from those who saw themselves as being its major beneficiaries. After 1890 the Board found itself running to keep up with the market growth at the top end of primary schooling; so much so that with the development of large class x or standard 7 classes in the city of Dunedin primary schools, it was in effect offering free secondary schooling to an enthusiastic market. Some attempts were made to provide alternative 'realistic' programmes at this level. But what the public wanted was 'academic' secondary education at an affordable price and that is what they got. Meanwhile the existing fee-paying high schools in Dunedin languished with static or declining enrolments. The Board was acutely conscious that in its class x provision it had strayed well beyond the intentions of the 1877 Act and it was doubtless profoundly relieved when that wily Premier, Richard John Seddon, sensing the public demand, introduced the freeplace system into secondary education after 1900. The Otago experience demonstrated that in New Zealand, growth in schooling opportunity took place from the bottom up. The Otago Education Board had had to ride this wave and learn at the same time that reforms in the examination system could proceed more readily in

those junior classes which no longer offered selective employment credentials at their endpoint.

Within its limited legislative power, the Board did what it could to support the birth of further education in the shape of evening classes supplied by the Dunedin Technical Classes Association. Its main work, however, was properly concentrated upon building a network of primary schools throughout the large province of Otago. In this it was conspicuously successful. Small rural schools were by their nature expensive to build and maintain - so expensive that they could not be sustained on their per capita income alone. But they could be cross subsidized by large schools in the towns and cities which the Board chose to construct first. The per capita profit on these schools was then used to supply schools and teachers to the rural sector. The real cost, of course, fell on the large city schools which typically had to maintain classes of over 100 pupils per teacher in rooms that were frequently health hazards and where drilling rather than learning took place in an atmosphere dominated by corporal punishment. In the end the Board came to accept that the cost to child health of these conditions was too high and that a weighting in government finance for rural schools had to be found. In time, Board members also came to sense a growing disquiet in the community about the heavy everyday use of physical punishment in Otago's schools. Under the leadership of Mark Cohen, now Chairman, the Board responded by introducing punishment regulations that constrained its use and required among other things that no male teacher punish a girl in front of the class, thus avoiding a dangerous public example of a man striking a female. It was a start upon a long road which has recently seen all corporal punishment banned from New Zealand schools.

To balance these achievements, it has to be said that the Board could on occasion stoop to such things as nepotism and the corruption that can come with power - the case of Peter Goyen being appointed to the Inspectorate without advertisement and on the initiative of his brother-in-law the Board Secretary, being probably the most notorious example to see the light of day. Nor could the Board, as it learned to its cost, operate in a world of education cocooned from other changes and controversies occurring in the wider community. When, for example, the Board decided for good educational reasons to compel the use of a particular reading textbook in Otago's schools, its policy was thwarted by the first major strike and boycott which occurred in New Zealand. This took place in the Whitcombe and Tombs printery in Dunedin in

1890, and after much huffing and puffing [‘How dare these socialists tell the Board what to do’] the Board yielded the day and did not require parents to buy the offending textbooks.

For all these frustrations and sometimes misspent energies however, the achievements of the Otago Education Board during these years were of a high order. Beginning as it did with the fixed purpose of putting the educational needs of the province and its own institutional integrity above all else, the Board by 1900 was ready to press the case for more centralised decision making to take place in the interests of educational growth and development. This was no whimsical change of heart. The Board had learned through its own endeavours that the time for change had come; a conclusion that attested to the soundness of George Parkyn’s later judgment ‘... that every shift in power from local to central authority [in New Zealand education] has been carried out in response to some clear and present defect or deficiency in the existing situation’.

## NOTES

1. *Administering for excellence*, Report of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration (Picot Report) 1988 Wellington Govt Printer

## ***Chapter 2***

### ***Education in the Otago Province prior to 1877***

From the earliest days of its settlement, the Province of Otago prided itself on the provision it made for public education. Founded as a 'Free Church' colony under the auspices of the New Zealand Company, a portion of the land sales revenue in the province was specifically set aside for the purpose of establishing churches and schools. Originally it was proposed that the public schools in Otago would form part of the wider pastoral work of the Free Church of Scotland but after the establishment of settlement in 1848, it became clear that a close relationship between church and school would be difficult to sustain. As with other 'church' settlements founded by the New Zealand Company, finance for churches and schools did not become available as quickly as had been promised. Furthermore, the settlement, which even from its inception had not been composed exclusively of Free Church believers, rapidly became a polyglot community after the discovery of gold in the 1860s. The direct influence of the church over the schools was, therefore, less than many had hoped, but it was nevertheless the case that the idealism and fervour of the early leaders left its mark upon the development of education in the province.

Those who were influential in educational matters in the early years of settlement were predominantly Presbyterian in their outlook and committed to the belief that schooling within a broad religious context was a 'blessing' that should encompass all. The majority of spokesmen also adhered steadfastly to the principle that as far as possible the governance of the people's schools should be the responsibility of the people themselves. 'Localism' provided much of the initial strength of educational practice in Otago but it was a characteristic that did little to promote the thesis that public education should be a matter as much of national, as of parish and provincial concern. Aided by revenue accruing from the gold-mining industry, Otago's politicians and educationists set out to build a good system of public schools within their province yet remained rather uninterested in the state of education in the country as a whole. In this respect, 'provincial interest' in Otago was never far from

the surface when the question of national education began to be seriously debated after 1870.

Prior to 1877, provincial expenditures on public education tended to reflect the disparities in economic development among the respective provinces. In 1869, for example, the recorded public expenditure on education in the several provinces was:<sup>1</sup>

Auckland	£119	Wellington £1289
Taranaki	£71	Nelson £6058
Hawkes Bay	£1022	Marlborough -
Canterbury	£ 7528	Westland £531
Otago	£15333	Southland £401

With the exception of Nelson, a province which spent more per capita at that time than any other on public schools, the marked disparity in expenditures reflected not only Otago's greater wealth and population but also its concern to provide schools. Spokesmen in the province were happy to describe their system as being 'the envy of New Zealand',<sup>2</sup> but they were much slower to accept the proposition that from a national point of view, the unevenness of provincial provision for schools was undesirable. After 1871, many politicians in Otago began to exercise a cautious agreement with E. W. Stafford's claim that 'The country cannot afford to allow savages to grow up in the midst of civilisation by withholding the means of elementary education from any class of the community'.<sup>3</sup> They found it more congenial, however, to argue that other provinces should seek by their own efforts to follow Otago's lead and should not expect their educational progress to wait upon philanthropy from the South.

The achievements that Otago sought jealously to preserve were not inconsiderable. Beginning with five schools established under the first Education Ordinance in 1856, the number of public schools in Otago and Southland had grown to 173 by 1877. In the same period, the numbers of pupils in average daily attendance had increased from 236 to 11,210 a year, and the numbers of teachers servicing the schools had risen from seven to 329. By New Zealand standards, the teachers in Otago were well-paid and the province was able to attract good teachers from overseas. Scotland was a favoured recruiting ground and special



incentives such as assisted immigration were provided for those teachers who had qualifications from Scottish Normal Schools. England was also a fruitful source of supply and after 1870, when the number of schools in Otago expanded rapidly, a substantial number of trainee teachers came into the province from the Australian State of Victoria. Otago did not, in fact, establish its own Normal School until 1876. For most of the period prior to 1877 it was able to live quite happily by plundering the trained teaching resources of other countries. It was a bonus that came with the discovery of gold.

Those who administered the provincial education system in Otago aimed to provide opportunities for schooling for all children regardless of social background or locale. Neither of these aims was fully realised. Strenuous efforts were made to provide schools for children in remote rural areas and for those living in 'boom and bust' gold towns. Inevitably, however, the facilities that they were offered were inferior to those that could be enjoyed by children living in the towns. But even the urban schools did not embrace all resident children. Estimates vary, but it is commonly thought that even in the best years of the provincial education system little more than half of the school age population in Otago actually went to school.<sup>4</sup> In large part, this came about because the province never attempted to legislate for compulsory schooling, and free education was not given as of right. There was a strong belief that parents would appreciate only something for which they made a direct contribution. Furthermore, it was felt that as long as a considerable portion of a school's income was derived from fees, control of the school could be rightfully exercised by representatives of parents and householders. For most of the provincial period, spokesmen in Otago believed that 'grassroots' enthusiasm was preferable to a compulsory system of education thrust upon the public at large, but by 1877 public opinion in the province was becoming increasingly persuaded that compulsory schooling was a priority that was at least as important as local enthusiasm.

The major features of Otago's provincial education system were established by the Education Ordinance of 1864.<sup>5</sup> This legislation, which placed the responsibility for schooling on locally-elected school committees, abolished all formal connections between churches and public schools. Compulsory bible reading was retained with the stipulation that, '... no child whose parent or guardian shall object to such instruction shall be bound to attend at such times'.<sup>6</sup> This was a compromise on the religious issue that satisfied most parties and

thereafter the public schools in the province were removed from overt influence by sectarian groups. The weighting of control was consistent with the principle that the people's schools should be controlled by the people. Under the Ordinance, school committees were required to provide a portion of the finance necessary to maintain the school or schools within their jurisdiction. They were also empowered to set scales of school fees and in the first instance to appoint teachers, to fix their salaries, and to oversee and evaluate the work of the schools.<sup>7</sup> None of these powers were delegated to the committees without qualification however. All public schools were required to be open to inspection by an official of the Otago Education Board which under the Ordinance, comprised 'the Superintendent and members of his Executive Council for the time being together with the Speaker of the Provincial Council'. The Board was empowered to give grants from public revenue towards meeting the plant and maintenance costs of respective public schools, to stipulate criteria required of applicants for teaching positions, and to set down the minimum scale of fees and teachers' salaries that committees could establish. The system introduced by the Ordinance was therefore, one which placed a premium upon local initiative and control through school committees, but it was also one that provided discretionary power to the provincial government acting through the Education Board.

It was hoped that the committees would be able to meet many of their monetary needs through local rates which they were entitled to strike under the Ordinance. It was quickly apparent, however, that the rating clauses were not acceptable to the public and within a year these were abolished. Thereafter the bulk of school finance apart from school fees was supplied by the government. There was no further major provincial legislation on education in Otago after 1865. Instead, in the period prior to 1877, the government through the Education Board attempted to exert greater control over the expenditure and quality of work undertaken in the public schools. Popular sentiment still attached great worth to school committee control but the logic of the government's power of the purse and the felt need to have greater uniformity in the work of the different schools, pointed to increased centralisation.

This was readily demonstrated in the work of John Hislop, the Board's first Secretary and Inspector of Schools. Hislop, who had attended Edinburgh University and taught for several years in various parish schools in Scotland, was one of several teachers brought to Otago

by the provincial government in 1856.<sup>8</sup> He took up his duties as a teacher at the newly-opened East Taieri School on 4 October 1856, and remained there until he was appointed Secretary of Education and Inspector of Schools for the Otago province in July 1861. In the years that followed, Hislop gained the sometimes justifiable reputation of being a stern dictator in matters of educational policy. Within the framework of the popular sentiment accorded in favour of school committee control, Hislop endeavoured to frame working rules that would allow the provincial government an influential voice in the conduct of the schools. As the years went by the rules became more stringent, but Hislop made no secret of the fact that he believed that one of the great weaknesses of the Otago system was that it provided insufficient powers of discretion to the central authority.

Nevertheless, in practice the influence which the Board through its Secretary exercised over the several schools was not inconsiderable. Matters of major moment seldom escaped Hislop's eye. In 1875, for example, the Waitahuna school committee which had chosen to make up its own mind concerning the siting of its new school, was bluntly informed by the Secretary, 'I was quite astonished to find that the committee *in opposition to my advice* (sic) had planted the school in the lowest part of the section .... As the committee have chosen to place the building in the hole they must now put up with the evil'.<sup>9</sup> Invariably too, committees found that if they received any money from the government for building or for renovations, the work completed had to be passed as being acceptable either by Hislop himself or by a person of his choice. Even the hiring of school rooms after school hours was subject to Board regulation. Hislop's standard reply to requests on the matter was that committees were at perfect liberty to charge for the use of the school at their discretion, provided that the use was for 'purposes calculated to promote the moral and social welfare of the inhabitants of the district'.<sup>10</sup> In any cases of doubt, he was more than happy to rule on what practices conformed to these criteria.

The committees attached the greatest importance to their power to appoint teachers. This was thought to be 'grassroots' democracy in education at its best. Nevertheless, the Board through its Secretary was not without influence in questions of appointment, and the Ordinance stipulated that the Board always had to be consulted if the committees desired to dismiss a teacher. Characteristically, Hislop ran a bureau of advice for committees, warning them off some candidates for positions and putting forward the claims of others. In 1874, for example, he

cautioned the Balclutha school committee, 'Mr. Petrie knows all about Mrs. H. and he very decidedly advises you to have nothing to do with her. You would never be out of trouble with her and her relations. On the other hand Miss Denton who has been excellently trained by Mr Stenhouse is a capital girl and a great favourite with Stenhouse'.<sup>11</sup> Teachers applying from outside the province also found that Hislop was an invaluable sponsor. A teacher writing from Wellington was informed that there could be no guarantee of a job for him in Otago but the Secretary suggested that if the applicant were to seek an interview with Mr Robert Stout (then visiting Wellington) and if Mr. Stout's opinion was favourable then 'you would be safe enough to come on here'.<sup>12</sup> Another applicant from Geelong in Victoria impressed Hislop with his good qualifications but was warned that, 'As appointment is in the hands of school committees it is difficult to bring about the appointment of any candidate who is not a resident in the Province'.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the applicant was advised by the Secretary to send over his certificates, to seek an interview with Mrs Burns, the Principal of the Otago Girls' High School, who would shortly be visiting Geelong, and above all to get a reference from Mr. Morrison of Geelong College. 'A line or two from him in your favour would have no little influence here'.<sup>14</sup> In these ways, Hislop was often able to exercise informal influence with what he once wryly called 'that great creature the public'<sup>15</sup> in the choice of teachers for Otago's schools.

In some questions of appointment the Secretary could be more directive and he never hesitated to make full use of the powers granted to him. The Ordinance entitled the Board to pay a substantial proportion of teachers' salaries according to a staffing scale laid down by the Board. Committees which attempted to appoint teachers in defiance of the scale were swiftly reminded of the Board's power of the purse. The Albert Town school committee was one such body that was sternly warned: 'If any appointment be made without the Board's sanction expressly given in writing, the Board will not pay the salary'.<sup>16</sup> The Board's power to stipulate the minimum qualifications required of successful applicants was also frequently used by the Secretary to invalidate choices by committees which he deemed to be undesirable.

On the question of dismissal, the Board was granted the ultimate sanction. As a rule the Board and its Secretary attempted to act as an impartial referee in the frequent disputes that arose between committees and teachers. More often than not too, teachers who appeared to be the victims of parochialism received the support of the Board. However,

teachers whom the Board had reason to suspect were guilty of unbecoming conduct were either dismissed or given a very strong warning. One erring party was duly informed: 'Complaints have frequently been made re your conduct and something must be done without delay. There are three courses open to be followed.

1. A very thorough and decided change in your whole life and conduct. You must wholly *cease* (sic) drinking intoxicating liquors: you must pay more attention to your school duties, and much less to other business outside your schoolwork.
2. Your resignation of the office upon which your conduct is bringing disgrace.
3. Your dismissal from office.<sup>17</sup>

In this way, the Board was able to perform the dual function of acting sometimes as a court of appeal for teachers and sometimes as the means by which a standard of behaviour was enforced upon all the teachers in the province.

In matters of dismissal the Board was especially prone to find itself at odds with either committees or teachers or both. Significantly, however, the Board found the charge of inefficiency in teaching to be a most difficult one to adjudicate. This was because no specific criteria of teaching efficiency were set down either in the Ordinance or, during most of the period under review, by regulation of the Education Board. The Ordinance followed the Scottish custom of decreeing that a public examination of a school meant that the public could attend and assist the inspector in his examination of the school. Clause Eleven of the Ordinance read in part: 'The Teacher ... shall whenever required to do so by the Inspector examine the Scholars under his charge in the presence of the Inspector and such of the members of the School Committee of the District ... as shall choose to attend such examination and it shall be competent for the Inspector and members of such Committee to take part and assist in such examinations.'<sup>18</sup>

No curricula were specified, however, and in the absence of these the Board usually had to fall back on the judgment of the inspector if the question of the dismissal of a teacher for inefficiency was raised. A further difficulty that frequently occurred was the fact that a given school was not examined by the inspector for several years. In these instances the Board was sometimes faced with the task of having to decide whether it would take the word of a school committee that the teaching in a given school was inefficient.

The absence of centralised professional direction in Otago's schools was a matter of increasingly critical public comment in the years under review in this chapter. One contributor to the *Tuaapeka Times* summed up policy when he argued in 1871 that 'The schools of Otago will never be what they should be, until a competent inspector is appointed, who can devote the whole of his time to a proper examination of all the schools, teachers as well as scholars'.<sup>19</sup> In that same year too, the *Otago Daily Times* concluded that the Board left far too much to the discretion of local committees and individual teachers with the result that there was less uniformity in the management of the schools of the province than there ought to be, and no uniformity at all in the methods of education adopted by the teachers. Worse still, was the fact that there were not even any standard text books in use in the schools.<sup>20</sup> By this date it was becoming clear that there was a growing disenchantment within the province with some of the educational disadvantages that seemed to accrue from extreme localism.

In 1874 moves were made to promote more centralised direction in the work of the schools. Donald Petrie, a Victorian teacher, was appointed Inspector of Schools and in that same year Petrie followed the example of other provinces in New Zealand by introducing a 'standards' system into all schools conducted under the authority of the Board.<sup>21</sup> The detailed course of instruction encompassing six standards was specifically designed to secure 'a uniform and better classification and co-ordination of subjects than have hitherto prevailed and to facilitate the inspection of schools by a definite understanding as to the work to be expected of the various classes'.<sup>22</sup> In common with their country of origin, the 'standards' in Otago were introduced to satisfy a specific need. Yet as soon as the new syllabus was published, criticism of what it involved began to be heard. Committees objected to the fact that their subjective assessment of educational merit had been overtaken by conformity to externally-imposed requirements. Furthermore, a number of interested critics were worried that the new curricula and a more definite examination system might encourage 'mechanical' learning in the schools. The evidence suggests that Petrie was not unaware of this fear and certainly he went to considerable pains to point out to committees and teachers that the standards were intended to represent minimum prescriptions only and were not designed to circumscribe all that should go on in a school.

Hislop was another commentator who appears to have concluded that the advantages of a 'standards system', while obvious from the point of

view of those critics who desired demonstrable uniformity and efficiency, were also the source of its greatest educational dangers. In 1876, he wrote: '... the Victorian system is most unsatisfactory.... The teachers are paid by results i.e. the number of scholars which are able to pass a minimum arbitrary standard in the several standards. The teachers depend on the numbers who pass for their bread and butter therefore everything good in a school is sacrificed to cramming the scholars so as to pass the minimum (sic) standard .... Let us keep the Provincial Boards and school committees and pay our teachers a fixed salary thus encouraging pupils to successful results ascertained by a much less mechanical mode than in Victoria.'<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, Hislop found the idea that teaching should be reduced to rule and examination prescription, to be distasteful. Whether the difficulty could be resolved by having standards prescriptions but no payment by results seemed in the light of Otago's experience by 1876 to be more than a little dubious. By that date, Petrie was complaining that teachers and committees were more than ready to drive their classes to pass examinations although the teachers' salaries were not immediately at risk.<sup>24</sup> At this point, however, development in Otago was overtaken by the creation of a national system of education and the whole question of syllabus requirements and the evaluation of pupils and teachers had to be worked out in a new context.

By 1877, it could be said that public education in the province had progressed steadily and, in relation to many other provinces in the country, more than adequately since 1848. After the incorporation of the Southland schools under the Education Board in 1869, the central authority had a far more onerous task than had been envisaged in earlier years. This was made heavier when demands for more centralised educational direction were met with the introduction of a 'standards' syllabus in 1874. For all the growth in the cost and numbers of schools to be serviced however, the population remained committed to the principle of local control of local schools. For this, influential opinion was still as late as 1877 prepared to pay the price of forfeiting compulsory and free education. Nor was it anxious in the name of educational progress to yield any more authority to the Board than it could be reluctantly compelled to admit. The Board, itself, differed significantly from the body which emerged after 1877. Being simply an arm or department of the provincial government, it was in no way directly responsible to the locally-elected committees. This often placed Hislop in a more advantageous position than that which was enjoyed by

his successor, but at the same time committees had some justification for regarding the Board as an institution alien to themselves. Accordingly, they had no particular incentive to view educational policy in other than a narrow parochial perspective.

After 1877, the province was compelled to restructure its educational administration in accordance with the requirements of the new national system of education. Provincial spokesmen were usually intensely proud of what the province had achieved in the previous 29 years and many were openly reluctant to see their educational endeavour submerged in a national hegemony. Nevertheless, a careful appraisal would suggest that despite its virtues and some obvious successes, Otago had barely begun to measure up to the task of designing an administrative system that would promote rather than hinder educational development. The move towards centralised professional direction in 1874 was a significant step, but further development on Otago's part alone came to an end in the following year with the abolition of all provincial governments.

## NOTES

1. *The Press* 15 Mar 1871
2. ODT 23 Jan 1871 Speech by J.Hislop to Otago Schoolmasters Ass'n.
3. *The Press* 9 Mar 1871
4. A.H.McLintock, *The History of Otago* 1949 Dunedin Whitcombe & Tombs p.691
5. *Otago Education Ordinance S. XV111 (1864)*
6. *Ibid*
7. *Ibid*
8. OEB LB 17 1876 Hislop/Gisborne 31 May p.311
9. *Ibid* 16 1875 Hislop/Waitahuna Schl Cte 15 Nov p. 933
10. *Ibid* 15 1874/5 Hislop/Arrowtown Sch Cte 17 Aug 1874 p.355
11. *Ibid* 15 1874/75 Hislop/ Balclutha Sch Cte 30 May 1874 p.9
12. *Ibid* 15 1874/75 Hislop/A.Rowe 25 Nov 1874 p.300
13. *Ibid* 15 1874/75 Hislop/E.Audrey July 1874 p.279
14. *Ibid*
15. *Ibid* 16 1875 Hislop/G.Norrie 9 Dec 1875 p. 995
16. *Ibid* 16 1875 Hislop/Albert Town Sch Cte 22 Dec 1875 p.1000
17. *Ibid* 15 1874 Hislop/Mr Lyon 14 Dec 1874 p.830
18. *1864 Ordinance* [Clause eleven]
19. *Tuapeka Times* 16 Feb 1871
20. ODT 8 July 1871



21. J.L.Ewing, *The Origins of the Primary School Curriculum* 1959 Wellington Whitcombe & Tombs
22. *Ibi.* p.72
23. OEB LB 17 1876 Hislop/J.McAndrew 6 July p.381
24. *Ibid* 17 1876 Petrie/D.S.C. 9 Oct 1876 p.583

## ***Chapter 3***

### ***The 1877 Act and the Otago Education Board 1877-79***

In 1876 when the provincial governments were effectively legislated out of existence, it became necessary to devise some alternative to the discrete provincial systems of public education which had grown up in earlier years. Arguments in favour of a national system of public education were not new. As early as 1869 the House of Representatives had agreed: 'That it is desirable to terminate the unequal distribution and lack of harmony which obtains in the administration of Educational Agencies under the inadequate action of Provincial Governments'.<sup>1</sup> The disparity in educational endeavour among the provinces had continued to excite critical comment and in 1871 the Premier, William Fox, had introduced a Bill that was designed to place all public schools in the country under the general superintendence of a central Education Department.<sup>2</sup> The Bill, however, had been defeated by politicians who were not anxious to see provincial autonomy interfered with by the central government, and by spokesmen who were opposed to the principle of state-aid to church schools which the Bill was prepared to allow. Thereafter, leading politicians like Fox had taken the view that any general legislation on schools 'at present would clearly be distasteful to large sections of the community'.<sup>3</sup> Supporters of a national education system had, therefore, had to bide their time until the change in political fortune in 1876 ensured that national education was no longer a subject that could be taken out of court.

H.A. Atkinson, the Premier of the day, was anxious to prepare an Education Bill as soon as possible but he was aware that the issues of 'centralism' and 'state-aid' were likely to be as fraught with political difficulty as they had been in 1871. In February 1876, Atkinson wrote to C.W. Richmond complaining of the difficulties he faced in getting political factions to act in terms other than those of a narrow provincial frame of reference. He added that he wanted to pass a good national education measure but he feared that the denominational difficulty would prove to be every bit as difficult a hurdle as was provincial selfishness.<sup>4</sup> In the end the Premier decided to delay the issue by passing an interim measure, the *Education Boards Act*, which allowed the existing

provincial systems of education to remain functioning with the receipt of government grants until new legislation was introduced in the following year.

Charles Bowen, the Minister of Justice, introduced the long-promised Bill on national education on 24 July 1877. He did not hesitate to declare that he had set his mind to design legislation which he believed might be both workable and acceptable to the greatest number of interested parties. 'Expediency', using that word in its political context, was the justification for many of the Minister's specific proposals in the Bill. On the religious issue Bowen's attitude was firm. In order to embrace the greatest number of people and provide the minimum offence to particular beliefs, there would be no state assistance to church schools and no denominational instruction in public schools. As had happened in many provinces (including Otago) prior to that date, church and state were to be entirely separate in education. Bowen, himself, was sufficient of an orthodox Anglican to stop short of advocating completely secular instruction in the public schools. He suggested instead that the school day begin, as it did in Otago and several other provinces, with a reading from Scripture. Right of withdrawal on the grounds of conscience was to be allowed.

Bowen also faced up squarely to the contentious issue of 'centralism'. He argued that since it was proposed under the Bill to supply most of the finance for public education from general taxation, and since it was agreed that the aim of national legislation was to place all parts of the country on an equitable footing with respect to facilities for education, it was necessary that a central Department of Education be established. The Bill provided that the Department would principally supply finance, prescribe curricula, inspect schools and examine and classify all teachers. Bowen was insistent in his belief that the Department should possess the power of inspection. 'Without such control', he concluded, 'the Government could never be satisfied that in every part of the country the same standard of education is being maintained'.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the Minister, despite the misgivings of educationists in several provinces, placed his faith in national standards and national inspection as a criterion for measuring value and equity of educational provision.

Having said this, however, Bowen hastened to assure those who were suspicious of centralised authority that it was not the intention of the government to control the schools in a detailed manner from Wellington. He stated: '... the Government is perfectly satisfied that the

general administration of the schools must be left in the hands of Local Boards: for without such local administration it would be impossible to keep up the public interest which is necessary in an educational system, and it would be impossible for the Department duly to attend to the wants of the different parts of the country ... I do not think that uniformity in the matter of education is at all advisable, but it is by emulation of different Boards, and the various suggestions made by them, that we shall gradually work out a thoroughly good system.'<sup>6</sup>

The provincial boards that had been the principal education authorities between 1853 and 1877 were, therefore, to remain in existence and so attest to the maxim that the people's schools should be governed in part by the people.

The retention of the boards was also calculated to placate provincialist sentiment in the Legislature and, as Atkinson had intimated, this was an important requirement of any measure which proposed in effect to nationalise past provincial endeavour. The Bill proposed that the boards would be financed from the government on the basis of £3-15s per capita average daily attendance in the schools. The practice of allocating monies on the basis of attendance returns had become almost universal among the old provincial systems of education, but what was now advocated constituted a windfall to those areas which in the past had made limited provision for public schools. Otago was one of the few provinces that did not, in fact, stand to gain a great deal in the first instance by what was proposed. This was because in return for income received from the central government, the province was required to give up the particular advantages which it had derived from leasing land endowments set aside for educational purposes in the early days of settlement.<sup>7</sup> The proposition was not one that Otago parliamentarians found especially attractive but Bowen argued persuasively that parents in the province would benefit because they would no longer have to pay the school fees charged in Otago's provincial days.

The Minister also proposed that the boards would have the major responsibility for the appointment and dismissal of teachers. Bowen was under no illusion that this would be deemed a major alteration to existing practice. He was well aware that in many provinces (including Otago) the school committees had clung tenaciously to the power of appointment. But he also believed that 'Under the existing system the teacher is entirely subject to the caprice of members of the Local Committee, and in very many cases he occupies anything but an

independent position.' Instead, he argued that the boards would be better constituted authorities to promote the professional status of teachers and provide them with the chance of fair and realistic promotion. In order to placate committee opinion, however, Bowen worded clause 45 of the Bill in such a way that the boards were required by law to 'consult' with school committees in all matters of appointment and dismissal. As events transpired this was a compromise that achieved its immediate aim but in the long-term it was a clause that probably caused more trouble between committees and boards than any other in the Act.<sup>8</sup>

Elected school committees were to provide a third tier in the administrative scheme proposed in the Bill. Many of the responsibilities which they had had in earlier years in different provinces were to be retained. One important power was added. It was now planned that the school committees as a whole would elect the members of education boards. There was no exact parallel to this in any provincial education system and certainly, as far as Otago was concerned, the provision was calculated to give school committees a far greater chance to influence the Board through direct political pressure than had been the case in the past. In this, as in other matters, Bowen had striven to give something to every interest group but, with the exception of the Department's powers of inspection, not too much power to any. His whole strategy was designed to produce legislation that would in the first place be politically acceptable and in the second, desirable, if possible, on educational grounds.

Most of the major provisions of the Bill were heatedly argued in the debate that followed. The religious issue excited the greatest amount of public controversy but it soon became apparent that the majority of members in the legislature had reached the reluctant conclusion that if the public schools were to operate with the minimum offence to the greatest number of people, the education provided would have to be entirely secular by law. Accordingly, Bowen's proposal to begin the school day with a Scripture reading was rejected and a 'secular' clause instituted in its stead.<sup>9</sup> The majority which favoured this amendment was not great but the argument which triumphed was that which Hislop had put forward in 1874. On that occasion, the Otago Secretary had written: 'I think it is a good thing to have the reading of the Bible daily but rather than give up the *National* [*sic*] system, I should yield the reading of the Scriptures and have what is styled a 'secular' system'.<sup>10</sup>

As far as New Zealand's legislators were concerned, the 'secular' solution was a solution of expediency, not a solution of conviction.

Few legislators quarrelled with the general proposition to establish a central Department of Education. Even the most ardent 'provincialist' recognised the need to have some agency to channel government funds to education boards and there was general agreement that a Department should be responsible for prescribing a national syllabus for the schools. Nevertheless, the Legislature as a whole was more than a little suspicious of the powers of inspection and regulation which Bowen proposed to reserve to the central authority. As one speaker put it: 'On the face of it this Bill is the least centralizing Bill that could be brought down; but, in reality, it is the most centralizing Bill that could be brought down .... No matter what it may be that the Board of a district thinks right to do, the Minister in Wellington may override it by the stroke of his pen'.<sup>11</sup> In the committee stages of the Bill this suspicion won out when the powers of inspection were placed with the boards instead of the Department. Politically, it was felt that a sensible balance of power between the Department and the district boards had now been created because the central authority was left with the authority to issue regulations. The educational consequences of this change, however, were to prove to be far-reaching and disastrous in their effect. The amendment ensured that the new Secretary of the Education Department would have no direct control over district expenditure, and it also ensured that the Department's professional officer, who was to bear the imposing title of 'Inspector-General', would have no control over the district inspectors. Thus the Gilbertian circumstances were devised whereby the Inspector-General was required to frame a national syllabus but was prevented from directly evaluating the worth of that same syllabus in the schools.

The increased powers which Bowen proposed to be given to the boards in relation to the school committees proved to be acceptable largely because it was felt that the committees were provided with an ultimate sanction in their power of the vote. Some rural legislators, it was true, were unavowedly suspicious of strong regional boards that would be centred in major towns or cities. Vincent Pyke, for example, the Member for Dunstan and former Member of the Victorian State Legislature, argued: 'It means that we are to be governed in matters of education from the sea coast. A thing we fought against. We do not want to go to Dunedin or to Auckland, or to any of the seaport towns for aid. We want education brought into the smaller districts... Who

would form the Boards in Dunedin, Auckland, Christchurch, Nelson, or any of those other places? It would be the people who live in the towns and nobody else.<sup>12</sup>

The plea for the rights of small schools, however, was countered by Bowen who pointed out that under the provisions of the Bill, every committee whether it controlled one small school, one large school, or [in a few cases] a number of large schools, would have exactly the same voting powers for board membership. On a numerical basis, the rural committees would have a decided franchise advantage in every board district, and it was reasoned that this would balance any tendency for board membership to become weighted in favour of urban residents. Reluctantly, the point was conceded by urban representatives and most of the provisions relating to school committee powers were passed unamended.

In the aftermath of battle, Bowen confessed himself satisfied at least that an Education Act had been passed. The forces of provincialism and denominationalism had rendered his measure less adequate than he had hoped but he was confident that defects in the legislation could be remedied from year to year as they became apparent.<sup>13</sup> As far as Otago was concerned, the new Act provided for some significant changes. Provincial spokesmen could no longer ignore the fact that schools existed in other parts of New Zealand and now derived their support from the same source as Otago. Furthermore, although the powers of the Department were weaker than those which had originally been proposed, it was inevitably the case that provincial autonomy would be lessened under the new system. On paper, it seemed that the newly-constituted Education Board would have more authority over the school committees than its provincial counterpart had formally possessed, but on the other hand it was a body that was now electorally accountable to the committees. For the parents, the changes were immediate and considerable. They could now have schooling for their children that was free by right, entirely secular, and governed by a national syllabus of instruction. For the teachers, the new Act seemed to promise immediately a more satisfactory form of remuneration than that entailed in collecting school fees. Many of them could also dare to hope that Bowen's legislation would free them from some of the petty tyrannies of school committees. In these, as in other matters however, expectations had to wait upon events to see how the Act would work out in practice.

By January 1878, the first effects of the new Act were evident in Otago as children flocked to the existing schools. The Dunedin Schools

Committee reported that it had had to refuse 129 children admission because there was no room left in the four schools under its jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> Shortly afterwards the Green Island School committee announced that with the sudden increase in the roll to 256 it had not only run out of room space but was also in desperate need of more teachers.<sup>15</sup> The district attendance returns indicated that these reports were not isolated phenomena. In 1877, 19,613 children recorded some attendance at the 173 public schools in Otago and Southland. One year later, 21,535 children recorded some attendance at the 134 schools in Otago alone. It was clear that substantial numbers of parents in the province were eager to make use of the free schooling provision which had been granted by the Act.

The leader writer of the *Otago Daily Times* was one commentator who had mixed feelings about the rush which occurred for free education. The writer feared that the new clientele were being drawn from poor and therefore socially undesirable homes; a prospect that he found more than a little frightening. 'In Dunedin', he warned, 'the roughs will taint the atmosphere of respectable children ... and there will be special problems with girls, who are apt to learn a great deal more from school than is set down on the lesson roll'.<sup>16</sup> These suspicions were also exercised by a number of correspondents and in January 1878, the Dunedin Schools Committee agreed that 'a certain class of scholars are better separated from the rest of people's children'.<sup>17</sup> The Board took no heed of these complaints, and demands for the segregation of scholars from undesirable homes soon died away. The agitation that had occurred, provided an unintended endorsement of Bowen's claim that public education should be free because 'allowing committees to say that this child or that child may attend school without payment introduces a very unhappy distinction...'.<sup>18</sup> This was exactly what had been the case in Otago, and it was clear that in provincial days the capacity to pay school fees had denoted respectability. Such a distinction was now formally abolished.

Schooling that was 'entirely secular' was also a new phenomenon in Otago, and it was not welcomed by church leaders. Bishop Moran, the Roman Catholic spokesman in the province, made it perfectly clear that in his view 'Godless' education was little improvement, if any, on the earlier provincial practice of beginning the school day with readings from Protestant scripture. Furthermore, the Bishop added his voice to the fears that the kinds of children now streaming into the state schools would lead to a deterioration in the moral standards of the young. He



warned the public that a system of education that huddled grown boys and girls together at the same desk to be taught by young men and women, and a system that banished all idea of God from the schoolroom, would necessarily end in immorality. Catholics were urged to have nothing to do with secular schools which by definition were vile and demoralising.<sup>19</sup> Leaders in the Presbyterian Church were also unenthusiastic about the secular principle stipulated in the Act, but for the time being, the majority reluctantly accepted the argument advanced by Dr D.Stuart, Minister of Knox Church, that the establishment of common schools was a more immediate priority than the retention of daily Bible reading.<sup>20</sup>

Soon, however, Presbyterian opinion sought a closer relationship between the state schools and religious instruction. Approaches were made to numbers of school committees in the province to obtain permission to use school buildings for the purposes of religious instruction outside regular school hours. At first the majority of committees refused the request, arguing that the intention of the Act was that the public schools should not be associated in any way with religious teachings. The *Otago Daily Times* believed, on the contrary, that 'clause 84(3) of the Act was expressly intended to encourage the affording of such facilities for religious instruction'.<sup>21</sup> This was also the view of the Education Board when it was called upon to give a decision on the matter in March 1879. In response to a committee's request that the Board sanction a decision of that committee to allow its school to be used by a Presbyterian clergyman outside school hours, the Board resolved that: 'The Board has no objection to the resolution the committee has passed. The Board has no power to interfere in the matter and would respectfully call the committee's attention to Clause 84 subsection 3 of the Education Act 1877.'<sup>22</sup>

Action of this kind satisfied some critics, but others made it clear that they would be content with nothing less than an abolition of the secular clause and a restoration of the practice of daily Scripture reading. On 18 January 1879, a group of about 80 people formed themselves into the Bible in Schools Association with the object of persuading the community that '... inasmuch as any system of education which does not provide for religious instruction is defective, it is desirable that the daily reading of the Bible in the public schools of the Colony be established by law'.<sup>23</sup> The Association, led by E.B.Cargill, numbered many prominent men in its ranks, and as the result of its efforts, many school committees in Otago passed resolutions in favour of the reintroduction of Bible

reading. At the committee elections in 1879, the Bible in schools issue was hotly debated and the Association achieved its most noteworthy local success when it prevailed upon the Education Board to pass a resolution in support of the Association's objective. Beyond this point, however, there was little that the Association could achieve within the provincial context. As its aim was to amend the national Education Act, its energies had to be channelled into the realm of national politics. Otago could no longer decide its own destinies in such matters, and despite their public expression of approval for Bible reading, the several committees and the Board made no attempt to infringe the secular clause laid down in the Act. It was quite clear that large numbers of parents were not deterred from sending their children to secular schools, and some teachers were bold enough to suggest in public that the new system was an improvement on the old, which had tended to build up a sense of minority persecution among Catholic children who had had to go outside and stand, often in the rain, while the Bible was being read.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, there was some criticism that the newly-structured public schools were not sufficiently secular in their practice.<sup>25</sup> The reading books used in the province's school rooms certainly contained material that could well be calculated to give offence to those parents who were other than orthodox Protestants in their religious beliefs. The first book in the widely-used *Nelson Step by Step* series, for example, contained among other extracts, the following passage: 'God sees us; but we do not see God. God is good to all. God is good to us. He gives us all that we have ... let us pray to God to give us all we need, and to keep us from harm. All good men pray to God. All good men love God .... Can you read the Bible? No, I cannot read the Bible yet; but I hope soon to try to read it. All good men love the Bible. It is the word of God, and it tells us of God. Ask God to make you love the Bible.'<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, many of Otago's teachers were closely associated with positions of responsibility in the several churches. The important point was, however, that it became clear after 1877 that the schools in Otago would formally adhere to the secular principle until the law on the matter was changed, if it were changed at all. The whole question of the relationship that was to exist between the Board and the school committees in the district, was also novel, but in terms of the wording in the provisions of the Act, it was much less clear.

The most dramatic change involved the constitution of the Board itself. Whereas previously in the province this body had been composed

of members of the provincial government, its membership was now to be the electoral choice of school committees. Press opinion was not hopeful as to the outcome. Gloomily, it was predicted that no one would be able to get a seat on the Board without intrigue, and that the watchword would be, 'You help me roll my log and I'll help you roll yours'.<sup>27</sup> Little confidence was held in the electoral wisdom of committees and it was believed that in the first election of the Board it would be quite likely that obscure nonentities would head the poll.<sup>28</sup> There were, indeed, hints of panic in some quarters at the thought that the new Act might result in past educational leaders being swept aside by a wave of popular democracy. As events transpired, the fears were groundless.

The new Board elected in April 1878 was composed largely of members who had served on the provincial Board as government nominees. The members returned were H. Bastings, W. Elder, C. de Lautour, J. Fulton, M. Fraser, J. Green, H. Clark, Professor Shand and D. Reid. The editor of the *Otago Daily Times* conceded that the result was 'better than we could have expected',<sup>29</sup> and he was especially pleased to note that the successful candidates were all well-known public men, providing both tried experience and a fair representation of town and country interests. The respective backgrounds of the new members bore out this claim. Donald Reid, the new Chairman, had been educated at the Burns Academy in Edinburgh, and after coming to the province as a young man, had built up a thriving stock and station agency. He had served prominently in the Provincial Council and at the time of his election was also a Member of the House of Representatives.<sup>30</sup> James Fulton was also a prominent public man and a Member of Parliament. Born in India, he was educated at Cheltenham and Blackheath where he received training in surveying and engineering. At the time of his election to the Board, he was farming in West Taieri and he was later Chairman of the Taieri County Council.<sup>31</sup> Cecil de Lautour was the son of a Judge of the High Court of Calcutta, and like Fulton educated at Cheltenham. He took up farming at Mt. Ida and was widely known for his youth work for the Presbyterian Church. He became the editor of the *Mt. Ida Chronicle* and represented Mt. Ida in parliament from 1876 to 1884.<sup>32</sup> James Green came from more humble origins. The son of a mechanic, he worked in Otago first as an agricultural labourer, then on the gold diggings, and finally in business on his own behalf as a carrier. He served as Chairman of the Waikouaiti County Council, and as a Member of Parliament periodically between 1878 and 1896.<sup>33</sup> Henry Clark was another member of the new Board

who possessed an impeccable 'Free Church' background. A farmer, he had been an Elder of Dean Free Church in Edinburgh and after coming to Otago, he was elected as an Elder of First Church. During the provincial era he had been a member of the Provincial Council, and for many years, after he had moved to Clarksville on the Tokomairiro Plains, he was Chairman of the Bruce County Council.<sup>34</sup> John Shand, another Scot, had graduated M.A. from Aberdeen University in 1854. In 1870 he was appointed to the foundation Chair of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at the new University of Otago, a position which he held until his retirement in 1914.<sup>35</sup> With such a membership, there was little need to fear that past provincial endeavour would be completely set to one side by the new national system. As far as the Board's professional officers were concerned, the continuity between the old and the new was equally as impressive. In January 1878, Hislop took up his new appointment as Secretary of the Education Department in Wellington. His new office was a fitting tribute to the reputation he had built up as an administrator of Otago's provincial education system. He was replaced as Board Secretary-Treasurer by Patrick G. Pryde.<sup>36</sup>

Pryde had been Hislop's assistant in the provincial era and was therefore thoroughly acquainted with the working procedures of Board administration. Donald Petrie retained his position as inspector of schools and was joined by William Taylor, a former Otago schoolmaster. With no sharp break in continuity occurring in either its lay membership or its professional officers the Otago Board exemplified the comment of the Minister of Education in 1879 that: 'A very large proportion of the gentlemen who in past years had given their services as members of Education Boards were again elected to the same position by School Committees . . . . In some districts scarcely any alteration took place in the composition of the new Boards. It was, no doubt, largely owing to this circumstance and to the retention of most of the Board's officers, that the change from the former to the present system was satisfactorily effected.'<sup>37</sup>

This was not to say, however, that the first Board election was free from excitement and controversy. The mechanics of the operation proved, in fact, to be very clumsy, while heated debate centred around two contentious issues which were to emerge again and again in later years. These were first, the question of fair district representation on the Board, and second, the balance of voting power between large and small school committees. Both of these issues were subsumed under the wider problem of finding an acceptable balance of power between town and

country interests. There was no arrangement for any ward system of representation laid down in the Act, and fears were early expressed in the province that the Board might be dominated by city representatives. When the first nominations for the new Board were publicised in February 1878 <sup>38</sup> it seemed likely that this might indeed happen, but after a good deal of inter-committee lobbying, the Board that was finally elected constituted a fairly good representation of the province as a whole. The members came from Naseby, Blueskin, Tuapeka, West Taieri, North Taieri, Lawrence, Tokomairiro, Port Chalmers and Dunedin. On the basis of school population alone, Dunedin city was under-represented while the north Otago town of Oamaru failed to gain representation at all. But most commentators felt that a reasonably representative Board had been elected in spite of, not because of, the design of the Act.

The question of the propriety of large and small committees having equal voting powers was the subject of much more acrimonious debate. Bowen had written this provision into the Act to reassure rural school committees that they would not be outvoted by those in the towns. The difficulty in Otago, however, was that some of the larger school committees were so large that many spokesmen felt that they were entitled to receive proportionately greater voting powers. The provincial system had grown up on the basis of committee initiative at the district level and the result was that while most of the existing committees in 1878 were responsible for only one school, a few were considerably larger. The school committees at Oamaru and Balclutha were responsible for two and three schools respectively, while the Dunedin Schools Committee was a relatively gigantic body which controlled four large schools in the city. In earlier years the question of relative voting rights had never of course arisen, but the effect of the new legislation was to give a body like the Dunedin Schools Committee, which enrolled one fifth of the total school population in Otago in its schools, no more by way of voting strength than that granted to the smallest rural committee with its sole-teacher school. Country interests were not disposed to be sympathetic when the matter was raised in public during the Board election proceedings in 1878. To them, it seemed that the larger committees had already demonstrated their superior lobbying powers, and the small bodies clung tenaciously to the electoral advantage which Bowen had provided for them in the Act. It was their guarantee that rural schools would be treated fairly by the Board.

However, working out the new relationships that were to exist between the Board and the committees involved more than getting used to the mechanics of Board elections. Principally, the two sources of greatest conflict which immediately occurred between the Board and the committees in general, were the procedures for appointing teachers and methods for supplying and accounting for committee expenditure. Neither of these questions was dealt with at all precisely in the Act and the problem of appointment procedures in particular, was destined to become an endless bone of contention between the respective educational authorities in the province.

As early as February 1878, the interim Board that had been established under the *Education Boards Act* decided that in accord with the stress which Bowen had placed on the matter, the Board would in future take the initiative in appointing teachers. The Secretary was instructed to circularise all teachers and committees 'calling their attention to the clause in the Act relating to the appointment of teachers'.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, spokesmen were in no doubt that appointment procedures under the new Act would be vastly different from those which had operated under the old provincial system. Professor Shand, a member of both the interim Board, and the newly-elected authority in 1878, argued that one of the benefits of the national Act was that it placed the major power of appointment in the hands of the boards. He believed that this was a vast improvement upon Otago's provincial system because 'the right of appointment should lie with the authority by whom the teacher is paid'.<sup>40</sup> This was not the general view of the school committees, however. Committeemen, steeped in provincial tradition, placed emphasis instead upon the word 'consult' which Bowen had written into the Act.<sup>41</sup>

At its first meeting on 9 May 1878, the new Board set up a sub-committee to handle all appointments. The Appointments Committee was empowered to recommend to the Board the appointment and promotion of all teachers, to make temporary appointments in cases of need, and to utilise information provided by the Board Secretary and inspectors when making its recommendations for appointments.<sup>42</sup> The consequences of this for school committees were soon revealed to the Dunedin Schools Committee, a body that was barely recovering from its irritation at what it deemed to be the inadequate voting power granted to it by the Act. On 17 May, the Dunedin Committee received from the Board the names of two candidates whom the Board proposed to appoint to the Albany Street School. The Committee was asked if it approved of

the proposed appointments, and having made this request, the Board assumed that it had discharged its legal obligation 'to consult'.<sup>43</sup>

But the Committee was not disposed to accept such a bland and empty interpretation. It could not believe that under the Act, school committees were to be reduced to 'scavengers' for the Board, to look after the repairs to school buildings.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the Committee resolved that it desired to co-operate with the Board in all matters calculated to promote the efficiency of the schools but could not recognise 'the action of any Committee of the Board assuming functions remitted by the Legislature to this Committee'.<sup>45</sup> Realising that the Committee's stand had attracted a great deal of public interest and considerable sympathy from committeemen throughout the province, the Board Secretary lost no time in replying to the protest that had been raised. Pryde pointed out that as the Board interpreted the Act, it had the full power to appoint or remove teachers although it was required first to consult the committees concerned. The Secretary also made it very clear that in future the Board intended to centralise all appointment procedures. His letter concluded: There appears to be a difference of opinion between your committee and the Board as to the necessity for submitting testimonials of applicants for promotion in the Public Schools to the School Committees of the respective districts. It would not be convenient for the Board to adopt this course as it does not intend in promoting teachers to call for testimonials believing that it has at its disposal more reliable means of forming an opinion regarding the merits of its officers.<sup>46</sup>

Further acrimonious correspondence followed and finally in a more conciliatory tone, Pryde conceded that there seemed to be some genuine difference of opinion as to what was meant by the phrase 'until the Committee have first been consulted'. In order to try and settle the matter, it was agreed that a meeting should take place between three representatives of the Committee and three of the Board.

The meeting was arranged for 27 June 1878, but before that date the Board sought legal advice on the appointment clause in the Act. In the memorandum sent to the Attorney-General, Robert Stout, on 20 June, Stout's opinion was sought on two points. First: Did the Act intend that the Education Board should make the initial steps in selecting a qualified person/persons and after submitting their names for approval to school committees then proceed to make appointments? Or Second: Was it contemplated in the Act, that ordinarily and as a general rule, the right of taking the initiative and making the selection shall be exercised by

the school committees and the Education Board shall as a general rule, although not necessarily, appoint the person so selected and recommended by the school committees.<sup>47</sup> Stout's reply is not on record but it seems unlikely that he endorsed the first of these alternatives which was certainly the procedure which the Board wished to adopt and which was one which was consistent with Bowen's comments on the matter when the Act was debated. The difficulty was, that in the interests of political compromise, clause 45 of the Act had been rendered thoroughly ambiguous and this was probably what Stout advised the Board.

At all events, the Board backed down from its stand when it finally met the Dunedin Schools Committee. A joint report of the meeting papered over the rifts which had appeared earlier, by declaring that there was after all no great divergence of view between the two authorities. The Board now stated that it had no objection to committees calling for applications for vacancies, and that it intended 'whenever vacancies occurred to submit to the Committees interested, the names of persons belonging to the teaching staff whom it considered most deserving of promotion together with an abstract of their qualifications and service taken from records of the Education Office'.<sup>48</sup> It was also decided that, provided the committees gave their approval, and 'other things being equal', the Board, in making appointments, would give preference to the persons recommended by the committees. For its part, and having apparently received most of the concessions it desired, the Dunedin Schools Committee stated that it had no wish to impede the Board's attempt to raise the quality of the teaching service and to provide a promotion system for teachers.

The truce, however, was an uneasy one. School committees in the province which had long enjoyed considerable autonomy in the appointment of teachers were not disposed to yield this right easily when the Act was not itself clear on the matter. Furthermore, there was considerable public sympathy for the argument that if the committees were not able to participate in appointments, nobody would want to serve as a committeeman. Referring to members of the Dunedin Schools Committee for example, the critic 'Civis' in the *Otago Daily Times* believed that members like the ex-Superintendent of the Province and the ex-Mayor of Dunedin 'deserve a higher office in life than the charge of a charwoman and the control of the coal bills'.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, when the point of confrontation was reached, the Board felt that in addition to the educational reasons earlier advanced, it was important



for its own status that it maintain a major role in the appointment of teachers. Its attitude was well summed up by James Fulton when he declared that it was incumbent upon the Board, as much as it was upon the school committees, to stand upon its dignity and not allow itself to be dictated to.<sup>50</sup>

By July 1878, however, the committees began to realise that their power of the vote was a sound means of ensuring that the Board would not be able to have its own way in appointments procedures. In that month de Lautour resigned from the Board and A.C.Begg, the successful candidate who filled the vacancy, headed the poll primarily because he promised the school committees that he would fight to restore to them full power of appointment. True to his word, Begg moved at the Board meeting in November, that the names of all qualified candidates be transmitted to the committees concerned and that a committee's choice be accepted as final by the Board.<sup>51</sup> Begg unashamedly admitted that what he advocated was in essence a return to the provincial system of appointments, 'under which education had flourished'.<sup>52</sup> He was convinced that with committee appointments the best teachers would get the best schools, and he took it to be self-evident that local committees knew better than the Board what the local requirements were for a teacher. To suggest otherwise, he argued, would be to offer a gross insult to committeemen.<sup>53</sup>

The Board, having grown more than a little weary of the appointments haggles with the Dunedin Schools Committee, declined to entertain Begg's motion, but the message was not lost on those committees which were politically conscious. Thereafter, candidates for a seat on the Board were expected to promise that they would not support any policy which threatened to curtail the right of committees to participate effectively in the appointment of teachers. The effect of this was more fully seen in the following year when the Oamaru Schools Committee successfully prevented the Board from sending forward the names of only some of the candidates for a vacant headmastership in one of the committee's schools. The full list was demanded, and ultimately received.<sup>54</sup> It would be true to say that during this period the shortage of teachers was so great that the smaller committees were generally happy to take the Board's advice on candidates for appointment. But by the end of 1879 the matter appeared to have been resolved such that if a committee were prepared to force the issue, the Board would give way and transmit the names of all candidates for the committee's selection. Otherwise, committees would receive a selected list of candidates from

the Board. Substantially, therefore, those committees which felt strongly on the matter were able to use their political power to maintain the appointment procedures which had operated during the provincial period. The destruction of Bowen's hopes, and of the chance to construct a viable promotion system for teachers, was the price that was immediately exacted for the maintenance of 'grassroots' democracy in Otago's schools.

The Board fared somewhat better in relation to the greater financing authority granted to it under the Act. In provincial days, Otago's school committees had received a substantial part of their income from school fees and had therefore enjoyed a relative degree of independence from the central Board. After 1877, however, all public money received by the committees was channelled through the Board. The committees no longer had any discretion over teachers' salaries which were paid on a scale fixed by the Board, and the income received by the committees for school maintenance was also determined by a set scale fixed by the Board. In response to directives from the Department of Education in June<sup>55</sup> and December<sup>56</sup> 1878, the Board compiled a scale based upon the quarterly average attendance returns of individual schools. The scale was then used to make varying contributions to the 'School Funds' of the respective committees. The amount of money received was clearly tied to size of school and the Board laid down very precisely what was to count as legitimate expenditure from the 'School Fund'. This introduced a degree of financial restriction on the committees that had been quite unknown in provincial days. Now, for example, if the committees wanted to spend money on school prizes and entertainments (something that was traditionally expected of committees in Otago) they had to find the cost from their own voluntary sources. Expenditure from the 'School Fund' for these purposes was expressly forbidden.

During the provincial years, the Education Board under Hislop's direction had come to exercise increasing control over major items of expenditure like the construction of school buildings. This trend was accelerated with the passing of the new Act. The Board was now almost wholly responsible for the total building programme in the province, and it was made abundantly clear to several committees that in future all major capital works would be decided upon and supervised by the Board. Objections by committees to this state of affairs were vociferous but fruitless. The Dunedin Schools Committee was one body that was an immediate beneficiary of the Board's new building programme, but it soon discovered that it was the Board, not the Committee, that was

going to make decisions about the siting and architecture of new school buildings in the district. After a series of angry meetings on the point, the Committee finally resolved to transmit the following sarcastic resolution to the Board: 'The Committee desire to thank the Board of Education for forwarding a portion of the plans of the George St. School, which is the first official intimation the Committee have had thereof; and they desire to place on record their opinion that the site chosen is in many respects objectionable.'<sup>57</sup>

The Board displayed no overt concern at the Committee's thinly-veiled rebuke. Nor was it disturbed by a complaint from the Palmerston School Committee that the Board had decided to make several substantial alterations to the existing school at Palmerston without consulting the committee. The Palmerston committeemen claimed that 'such a thing was not heard of under the old regime',<sup>58</sup> but their letter was simply received with laughter when it was read to the Board. Restricted in their local expenditure, and being unable to participate in decisions involving major capital works, the committees were forced to recognise that the new Board was stronger in its directive powers than the old. Some committeemen openly stated that it was this fact that led them to cling tenaciously to the right to be fully consulted in the appointment of teachers. They felt that if this power were overridden as well, the school committees would be entirely useless.<sup>59</sup>

Although it was clear by the end of 1879 that the teachers in Otago were not going to be as free from parochial domination as many in the Legislature had hoped they would be, the Board was able to provide them with several advantages that had not been offered under the old provincial system. Under the 1864 Education Ordinance the teachers in the province had received their income from two sources; first, a fixed sum from the Board which was granted irrespective of size or locale of school, and second, a proportion of the school fees which were charged on a scale set largely within the discretion of individual school committees. It was a system which had been predicated upon the initiative and responsibility of local committees but, as the Board pointed out in 1878, it was also a system which had resulted in inequalities of remuneration among teachers holding positions of equivalent responsibility throughout the province.<sup>60</sup> The new Board decided as one of its first tasks to amend this state of affairs. In May 1878, the Board established a finance committee to draw up a scheme for the payment of teachers' salaries and also determine staff allocation in given schools.<sup>61</sup> In July a new remuneration scheme which was to

operate in Otago for much of the remainder of the century was introduced.

The new remuneration system, which was largely the work of Professor Shand, maintained the former twofold distinction in source of salary, but did away entirely with the discretion and responsibility of school committees in the matter. Teachers were now paid first, a fixed sum based upon their qualifications and seniority (this sum was rather misleadingly called a bonus) and second, a remuneration based upon quarterly average attendance returns of the schools in which they worked. There were no 'payments by results', and although the principle of 'payments by attendance' was certainly incorporated in the scale, the advantage of the 'bonus' scheme was that a proportion of the teachers' income was received irrespective of size or locale of school. Some teachers were immediately critical of the fact that their salaries were now to become more 'dependent upon the state of the barometer'<sup>62</sup> than had been the case in the past, but few expressed the desire to go back to the old scheme of payment through the offices of school committees. While it was true that the effect of the new scheme was to replace the whims of individual committees with the vagaries of weather and disease in partly determining salaries, most critics appeared to regard it as the lesser of the two evils.

A further positive advantage was that under the new scale the Board was able to continue to pay Otago teachers salaries that were well above the New Zealand average. Being a district with a relatively high school attendance figure, Otago was well served by the capitation basis of income that was introduced under the Act. This provided it with the initial scope to be more generous to its teachers than was the case in most other board districts. As a matter of deliberate policy, the Board also decided that it was preferable to have a reasonable number of well-paid teachers rather than a greater number of poorly-qualified personnel.<sup>63</sup> This was the principle which it built into its salary and staffing scale. For the teachers, this often meant larger than average classes in return for their higher incomes. For the Board, it meant a plentiful supply of teachers from other board districts and other countries who were anxious to get positions in Otago's schools which were expanding rapidly with the roll increases after January 1873.

The Board continued, nevertheless, to exercise its traditional caution in the appointment of 'outsiders'. In spite of a desperate shortage of teachers for country schools, many applicants from other parts of New Zealand were typically informed by the Secretary: 'I am afraid there is

little chance of your being appointed, as an applicant from another province labours under the disadvantage of not being on the spot'.<sup>64</sup> But as in former years, teachers from approved sources beyond New Zealand stood a fair chance of success in gaining appointment. Victoria continued to be a popular recruiting ground. In November 1878, the Board agreed that deliberate attempts should be made to attract young men under the age of twenty-five from Victoria, although it also decided that no general advertising should take place in Australia because this would 'just attract drifters and we would have to give them jobs'.<sup>65</sup> Instead, it was planned that the Secretary would conduct a system of sponsorship through Mr A. Don, a teacher at the Port Chalmers District High School. Don had come out from Victoria during the provincial years, and Pryde clearly placed considerable weight upon his judgment. In November, the Secretary wrote to Don explaining the qualities which the Board was looking for in Victorian applicants. He added: 'Should any young men come out from Victoria just at a time when there are no vacancies we will enter them as students at the Normal School and pay them 20/-per week for the time they attend. You might explain this to them. I had applications from six teachers from elsewhere yesterday but only one or two of them seemed any good.'<sup>66</sup>

Pryde claimed to know that at that time there was an 'unsatisfactory state of education matters' in Victoria and that many an individual teacher was anxious to leave that Colony because of the 'almost impossible chance of ultimate promotion in his profession'.<sup>67</sup> By December 1879, the Secretary had either recruited, or was negotiating with, 29 teachers from Victoria, many of whom had been contacted through Don's services.<sup>68</sup> Having done what it could to persuade trained teachers to come to the district, the Board appears to have assumed that there was no further call for it to make major policy decisions on professional matters relating to the schools. The provincial Education Board had concerned itself largely with the provision of schools, leaving the actual work in the schools to be evaluated by the inspector and the district committees concerned. The new Board sought to carry on this procedure, a course that was encouraged by the fact that the 1877 Act allocated all responsibility for syllabus prescription to the Department. Thus, when the new national syllabus regulations devised by the Inspector-General, the Reverend W.J. Habens, were promulgated in September 1878 and were greeted with a storm of protest from teachers, the Board did not feel any duty to add its own opinion in the matter.

Habens' syllabus followed the English practice of providing detailed prescriptions for six standards of work, each standard to be examined annually by the inspector to determine whether or not an individual child passed a given standard.<sup>69</sup> By that date, the principle of the 'standards' had become familiar to Otago's teachers through the provincial scheme established in 1874 but they were totally unprepared for the extent of Habens' prescriptions. Their reaction was typified by the remark that if conscientious teachers attempted to get through all the work prescribed in the new syllabus 'they will make rapid strides to the Lunatic Asylum or to the cemetery'.<sup>70</sup> Even Petrie reported that 'The great extension of the subjects of instruction under the new Act has caused the teachers of small schools no little consternation'.<sup>71</sup> He added that anyone who was acquainted with the requirements of the new course of instruction laid down for public schools, would know also of the great and almost insuperable difficulty of overtaking it'.<sup>72</sup> By 1879, parents were certainly aware that the immediate effect of the new prescriptions was to force teachers to employ methods of teaching which one critic described as being nothing but 'grind, grind, grind, cram, cram, cram'.<sup>73</sup> In August of that year, the Dunedin Schools Committee devoted a long discussion to complaints from parents that the teachers of large classes in the city schools were explaining very little of the lesson material to pupils because they were in a continual hurry to ensure that the scholars were 'primed' for the annual examinations.<sup>74</sup> Two months later, several committeemen moved: 'That the Dunedin Schools Committee memorialise the Board of Education, and respectfully call their attention to the syllabus under which our schools are worked, which from the reports of teachers and others, is found to be too extensive in the subjects it embraces; and that the attempt to teach all the subjects therein specified to young children can only result in a species of "cram" highly detrimental to the intellectual and bodily health of the children. And should members of the Board be of the same opinion, the Committee urgently request them to take whatever steps may be deemed necessary to bring the subject under the notice of the Minister of Education.'<sup>75</sup>

The motion was not passed, however, because the majority of the committee considered that the syllabus was a professional matter that was beyond its province to criticize. This was also the view of the Board, despite the fact that by July 1879 the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* was stirred to ask 'What hope is there for the future of our education system, if the supreme local authority (the Education Board) does not concern itself with the practical work done in the schools under its care'.<sup>76</sup> At no

stage during these years did the Board see fit to debate its inspectors' reports, and the general attitude of Board members seemed to suggest that they regarded syllabus difficulties as something to be settled by agreement among teachers' organisations, the inspectors, and the Inspector-General. The prior problem was, however, that the Board's determination to preserve its provincial autonomy was sufficiently powerful to ensure that professional liaison of this nature could not take place.

In terms of the 1877 Act, Habens was allowed no legal right of direct discussion with inspectors and teachers, and the Board sought to ensure that this division would be maintained. As early as April 1878, the Board made it clear to the newly-appointed Inspector-General that any attempt on his part to have direct contact with the teachers in the province would be construed 'as an attempt to lower the Board's dignity'.<sup>77</sup> Thereafter, Habens went out of his way to avoid suspicions of this charge. Professionally, the result was a disaster. The Inspector-General refused to consult with the OEI over his proposed syllabus regulations, and although the Institute complained bitterly that teachers would soon be 'little better than intellectual drudges tagged on to the tail of an Education Bill',<sup>78</sup> the Board, at this stage of its history, was prepared to exact such a price for its autonomy.

The full nature of the price of having schools taught and examined by people who were not responsible to the authority which designed the syllabus, may readily be inferred from Petrie's own description of the way he conducted examinations. The Otago inspector wrote: 'The pupils place their slates against the breast. They have their pencils in their right hand by their side. After the question is given, the examiner orders 'write the answer'. All the slates are brought forward and the answer if known is written down otherwise a short line is drawn. Then the order 'slates back' is given. This system has the great advantage of compelling prompt answering and practically preventing copying.'<sup>79</sup>

In a situation in which professional authority was so discretely divided that none was directly responsible to another, it was small wonder that Habens was criticised as being a person who 'had no knowledge of child nature, or of the capacity of the mind of a child'.<sup>80</sup> The tragedy was that although the syllabus which he had designed was manifestly unsuitable, the provincialism of the Otago Board and its counterparts in other districts, conspired to keep the Inspector-General from becoming directly aware of that fact.

The Board's attitude to the Department on syllabus questions was consistent with its attitude towards the new central authority as a whole. Essentially, it regarded the Department as the agency for the government's distribution of capitation finance, but it also watched Departmental decisions carefully in order to ensure that Otago received what the Board regarded as its fair share of any monies voted especially for building grants. The Department was of the opinion that in the interests of national equality, the poorer districts should receive a greater share of government money for building expenditure. But the Board would have none of this. Otago, with its 134 schools in 1878; and an average attendance per school of 100.7 scholars, was in a much better position to spend a good proportion of its ordinary capitation grant on buildings than for example was Auckland, which had 193 schools with an average attendance per school of 47.1 scholars. The Board, however, complained vociferously that unless it received an extra buildings grant of £46,500 for the 1879 year it would be placed 'in the unenviable position ...of being expected to provide for the educational requirements of the district, while being without the requisite means to do so'.<sup>81</sup> After intensive lobbying in Wellington, the Board had to be satisfied with less than half the sum it had named, but it still received the largest sum of any board district. By refusing to trust the judgment of the Department therefore, the Board had got what money it could win, and no-one was in any doubt that this was more than would have been the case had the building grants being distributed in terms of 'actual want'.<sup>82</sup>

The evidence suggests that the Board felt at its strongest when it was using its political strength (including the parliamentarians among its own members) to win prizes in 'the scramble for money in Wellington'. It had no wish, nor did it see any need, to allow the Education Department to encroach upon the autonomy granted to the district boards under the new Act. This was as true in financial matters as it was true in the case of professional leadership. In its public utterances, the Board gave the impression first and foremost of being a local authority dedicated to the task of getting as much public money as it possibly could for the province's schools. Only on rare occasions did it take on the added semblance of being a lay group exercising some power of decision about what was actually to be done in the schools.

Looked at in this light, the Board's record by the end of 1879 could be regarded with some satisfaction. It had most certainly succeeded in maintaining the superiority in educational provision which Otago had possessed before the national Act was passed. Furthermore, the Board



had ensured that many of the province's educational practices had survived the transfer to a national system or were modified only slightly in part. It had also used the financial discretion allowed it by the Act to exert greater control over the school committees than had been possible under the provincial system. The long-term advantages of this development, although not immediately clear to parochial interests, were considerable. A decision by the Board in 1879 to build more large schools in the city for example, raised the ire of some rural districts. Nevertheless, the logic of the capitation grant system ensured that the immediate creation of large urban schools was the best possible way of providing eventually for the maintenance and construction of small and therefore grossly uneconomic schools. Isolated country areas were to benefit over and over again from this particular decision in the years ahead.

On the other hand, the Board had failed by the end of 1879 to convince the school committees that their role in the appointment of teachers should be one that was virtually nominal. Indeed, it seemed likely by that date that the committees would use their electoral power to reverse the position and force the Board to play a limited part in appointments procedures. It was true that in its recruitment policies from without the province and in the enlightened salary schedules which it had devised, the Board had made positive contributions to educational development. But, apart from the fact that they were obviously framed in the perspective of provincial interest rather than national need, these achievements had to be set alongside the fact that to that date, the Board had failed conspicuously to deal with, or even recognise responsibility for the practical teaching and learning problems that were developing in the classrooms throughout the province. What was more, in these years the Board had been lucky. Times had been prosperous and the government lavish in its generosity to Boards pleading their need for more money. As early as April 1878, however, Professor Shand claimed that the weakest feature of the Education Act was the fact that the Boards were entirely dependent on the government for their revenue. He warned his audience that in times of financial pressure the temptation on the part of government will be irresistible to economise at the expense of the efficiency of the schools.<sup>83</sup> By late 1879, the growth of unemployment in Dunedin was a local sign that the 'boom' years were coming to an end. The next decade, which was to be one of acute economic depression, would illustrate only too clearly the accuracy of Shand's prophecy.

## NOTES

1. NZPD Vol 6 1869 pp.522-526
2. J.D.S.McKenzie, *The First Legislation on National Education in New Zealand, New Zealand Educational Studies*, Vol 4, No 1, 1969 p.24
3. W.P.Morrell, *The Provincial System in New Zealand*, 1964, Wellington, Whitcombe & Tombs, p. 237
4. *Richmond/Atkinson Papers*, ed. G.H.Scholefield 1960 Wellington Govt Printer Vol. 2 p.413 H.A.Atkinson/C.W.Richmond 10 Feb 1876
5. NZPD Vol 24 1877 p.32
6. *Ibid* pp. 32-33
7. In effect these reserves were nationalised by the *Education Reserves Act 1877*
8. *Education Act 1877* [Clause 45]
9. The secular clause read: The school shall be kept open five days in each week for at least four hours, two of which in the forenoon and two in the afternoon shall be consecutive, and the teaching shall be entirely secular in character. *1877 Act* [Clause 84:2]
10. OEB LB 15 1874 Hislop/ Prov Treasurer 14 Nov 1874 p.832
11. NZPD Vol 25 1877 p.231
12. *Ibid* p.205
13. ODT 5 Jan 1878
14. *Ibid* 24 Jan 1878
15. *Ibid* 22 Feb 1878
16. *Ibid* 24 Jan 1878
17. *Ibid* 26 Jan 1878
18. NZPD Vol 24 1877 p.34
19. ODT 16 Feb 1878
20. *Ibid* 4 Jan 1878
21. *Ibid* 27 Mar 1878
22. OEB LB 1878/79 Pryde/Oamaru Sch Cte 28 Mar 1879 p.439. The clause in the Act read: The school buildings may be used on days and at hours other than those used for public school purposes upon such terms as the Committee may from time to time prescribe. *1877 Act* [Clause 84:3]
23. ODT 18 Jan 1879
24. *Ibid* 9 June 1879
25. *Ibid* 17 Dec 1878
26. *Child's First Lesson Book* pp.79-80
27. ODT 28 Feb 1878
28. *Ibid*
29. *Ibid* 10 May 1878
30. DNZB Vol 2 p.219
31. G.J.Griffiths, *James Fulton & His Family* Dunedin J.McIndoe
32. DNZB Vol 2 p.200
33. ODT 21 Aug 1905
34. W.P.Morrell, *The University of Otago* 1969 Dunedin J.McIndoe p.9

36. *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, Vol 4 p.162
37. AJHR 1879 Vol 2 H-2 p.2
38. ODT 27 Feb 1878
39. *Ibid* 14 Feb 1878
40. Address given to the first annual meeting of the *Otago Educational Institute* 23 Aprl 1878
41. Clause 45 of the *Education Act* read: The Board of each district shall be entitled to appoint teachers for every school under its control, or to remove such teachers from one school to any other within the district ... Provided that the Committee may recommend teachers to the Board for appointment, and may also recommend the suspension or dismissal of any such teacher: but no appointment, suspension, or dismissal shall take place until the Committee have first been consulted.
42. ODT 10 May 1878
43. *Ibid* 22 May 1878
44. *Ibid*
45. *Ibid*
46. *Ibid* Pryde/James 12 June 1878 pp.216-219
47. OEB LB 19 1878 Memo to Attorney-General 20 June 1878 p.258
48. *Ibid* LB 20 1878/79 pp.607-608
49. ODT 5 July 1879
50. *Ibid* 15 May 1879
51. *Ibid* 1 Nov 1878
52. *Ibid*
53. *Ibid*
54. OEB LB 20 1878/79 Pryde/Hardy 14 May 1879 p.605
55. AJHR 1878 Vol 2 H-2 Circ 11 8 Aug 1878 p.156
56. *Ibid* Reg 2 5 Dec 1878 p.146
57. ODT 17 June 1879
58. *Ibid* 25 Apr 1879
59. *Ibid* 17 June 1879
60. AJHR Vol 2 1879 H-2 pp.65-66 Also Annual Report Otago Education Board 1878
61. ODT 10 May 1878
62. *Ibid* 20 July 1878
63. AJHR 1879 Vol 2 H-2 See also OEB Report pp.65-66
64. OEB LB 19 1878 Pryde/Mrs McCann 15 Apr 1878 p.93
65. ODT 1 Nov 1878
66. OEB LB 20 1878/79 Pryde/A. Don 11 Nov 1878 p.274
67. *Ibid* 20 1878/79 Pryde/Livingstone Schl Cte 18 June 1879 p.776
68. Correspondence in OEB LB 19, 20 1878/79
69. Ewing, *Primary School Curriculum op. cit.* Ch.6
70. ODT 19 Oct 1878
71. AJHR 1879 Vol 2 H-2 See also OEB Report pp. 97-102
72. *Ibid*
73. ODT 15 Jan 1879

- 74. *Ibid* 19 Aug 1879
- 75. *Ibid* 28 Oct 1879
- 76. ODT 12 July 1879
- 77. *Ibid* 2 May 1878
- 78. *Ibid* 10 May 1878
- 79. OEB Report 1877 p.33
- 80. ODT 9 Dec 1878
- 81. *Ibid* 7 Oct 1878
- 82. AJHR 1879 Vol 2 H-2 p.11 Circ 15 2 Nov 1878
- 83. Address to the Otago Educational Institute April 1878. ODT 4 May 1878

## ***Chapter 4***

### ***Consolidation in the face of Retrenchment 1880-84***

The year 1880 marked the beginning of a long period of economic depression in New Zealand's history. Unemployment and reduced public revenue not only lessened confidence in the future of the Colony but they also had an adverse effect upon attitudes towards the continued growth of a state education system that was wholly financed from the Consolidated Fund. It was one thing to distribute largesse in times of plenty, but it was quite another to have to face the prospect of servicing rising school enrolments from a smaller purse. Expenditure on education was the largest single item of the government vote and successive ministries quickly found that it was the hardest to control or retrench. As long as the school population continued to rise irrespective of the state of the Colony's finances, it was obvious that any retrenchment measure which forced the closure of many schools would be politically undesirable. On the other hand, the relatively impotent position of the Department of Education under the 1877 Act meant that a judicious pruning of educational expenditure by the central authority was not possible.

Faced with these uncomfortable facts, the hard-pressed Ministries did what they could to force education boards to limit their budgets to what it was deemed that the country could now afford. In August 1880 an extra ten shillings per capita average attendance allowance which had been granted by the Grey Ministry to all boards was abolished.<sup>1</sup> Further retrenchment took place in the following year when payment was stopped for all children who were enrolled in the public schools but who were under five years of age.<sup>2</sup> In relation to what was to occur in later years, these reductions in income were not unduly severe and they were consistent with the depressed state of the economy in general. Nevertheless, the boards complained so bitterly about their financial circumstances that in 1882 an extra five shillings capitation grant was introduced. Two years later, however, the finances of the Colony had again deteriorated badly and in the view of many critics it was obvious that other and more stringent economies would soon have to be imposed.

As early as 1880, many parliamentarians had come to the conclusion that straitened financial circumstances required a total revision of the administrative structure of the education system which had been introduced by Bowen's Act. The boards were the major target of criticism. 'Their ideas', one legislator complained, 'are too big and always will be, so long as they are not directly responsible to the people from whom the money comes'.<sup>3</sup> The boards, however, were too strongly identified with provincial sentiment to be seriously in danger of being abolished. Moreover, some boards suggested on their own behalf, modifications that were designed to meet the objection that, as local authorities, the boards were unduly extravagant because they were not directly accountable for monies expended. The Otago Board was one board that had such modifications in mind. When it learned in July 1880 that the extra ten shillings capitation payment was to be abolished, the Board concluded that this decision by the government was but part of a necessary movement towards the day when school fees would need to be re-imposed. As a result of its sudden reduction in income, the Board immediately reduced the salaries of its teachers by between five and seven and a half per cent, but it was not dismayed at the suggestion that school fees could be reintroduced to make up the loss in government supplied revenue. Indeed, it was so sure that this would soon be the case, that it resolve that: '... the Board is of the opinion that the salaries of teachers should not be entirely dependent on the financial exigencies of the Government, but that power should be given to Boards to levy school fees so as to permit those more directly interested to contribute towards the education of their children.'<sup>4</sup>

In arguing thus, the Board endorsed the sentiments of a significant sector of public opinion in Otago which had long been suspicious of the moral 'fitness' of 'free' education and which was only too anxious to abandon the experiment introduced in 1877. In its argument in 1880, the Board dwelt lovingly upon the virtues of the old provincial system of education, but it appeared conveniently to overlook the fact that that same system had embraced less than half the school aged children in the province and had produced invidious social distinctions in relation to parental ability to pay fees. The Board's argument on this point revealed clearly that at this stage in its history, the Board still regarded itself as a provincial authority which had a necessary but minimal connection with the central government.

This was an attitude that was also consistent with the Board's policy towards the continuing scramble for building grant monies from

Wellington. The policy of Board members was nothing more or less than one of single-minded determination to get all the money that they could for the district's schools. In this respect, arguments about the state of the Colony's finances as a whole, or pleas from the Education Department to allocate monies to areas of greatest need, had no effect on the Board's thinking whatsoever. In March 1880, at a time when the finances of the Colony were clearly becoming far from healthy, the Board received a further £7000 out of a total supplementary grant of £50,000 which parliament had voted for school building expenditure. For a province that was already relatively well endowed, the allocation which it received was by no means ungenerous, but this was not the view of the Board which cavilled at the miserliness of a government which gave only one seventh of the grant to a district that enrolled over a quarter of the nation's school population.<sup>5</sup> The Board did not hesitate to let its views on the matter be known to politicians visiting Dunedin and in its report for 1880 it complained vigorously about the miserably inadequate sums it had received for building purposes.<sup>6</sup> In the end the Minister of Education gave in to the pressure mounted by Otago and several other boards and agreed to distribute 'future votes more strictly according to population'.<sup>7</sup> As far as the Board was concerned, retrenchment or no retrenchment, its first duty, as long as the system lasted, was to get all the money that was within its power to win.

In spite of general public complaints that 'the State cannot afford to continue such payment',<sup>8</sup> the Board, in fact, displayed a remarkable ability to gain and spend government money for building purposes during these years. Between 1880 and 1884, 21 new schools were constructed in the province, and several of these were very large stone schools built in the central city area. In terms of money alone, the Board spent £72,453 on providing new schools and additions to existing schools between January 1878 and October 1883. A further £20,705 was spent solely on building large schools in Dunedin, and the bulk of this expenditure took place *after* the government's general retrenchment measures had been announced in 1880.<sup>9</sup> By 1884, therefore, it had become clear that although under *The Education Reserves Act 1877* the province had lost the special benefit of its education endowments, it had suffered no marked financial disadvantages as far as expenditure on schools was concerned. As long as the Board continued to know the ways of political action, and as long as a high rate of school attendance was maintained, Otago's place as a favoured beneficiary seemed assured.

Healthy increases in school enrolments were however, as necessary in Otago as they were in other districts if the Board was to do its lobbying successfully. Accordingly, the Board suffered some disquiet when the rapid increases in the province's enrolments ceased after 1880. The immediate cause of the abrupt halt in the upward trend was the government's decision in 1881, to make no further payments for children under five years of age. This cost six schools in Dunedin alone, an aggregate of nearly 1000 attendance places.<sup>10</sup> Roll numbers rose much more slowly thereafter, and by December 1884 the total enrolment in Otago's schools was only marginally greater than it had been in 1880. This trend was a portent of the years ahead when Otago would no longer be a growth centre of New Zealand, but for the present the Board could be satisfied that it had made the most of its opportunities in the years of maximum school enrolment.

In some respects the Board found that the retrenchment decisions by the government enabled it to consolidate its administrative hold over the school committees. With less revenue being received from capitation payments, it became incumbent upon the Board to supervise school committee expenditure more closely, and the Board Secretary, P. G. Pryde, appears to have delighted in the new emphasis given to his role as watchdog of the public purse. Characteristically, Pryde treated the committees as if they were wayward children constantly in need of admonition if they were not to become recklessly extravagant with the grants they received from the Board. Pryde, who was described by one critic as being 'a master of condensed insolence' and labelled by another as being 'worse than the Pope', reserved his choicest written venom for those committees that failed to render their accounts in the approved manner. In 1883, the government increased the Secretary's powers in the matter when it insisted that all committee accounts be subject to board audit.<sup>11</sup> The amended regulations brought no joy to the committees, but as far as Pryde was concerned the government's action was most necessary and appropriate. One Otago committee which dared to suggest that the new audit regulations were contrary to the spirit and letter of the Education Act was tartly informed: 'I am unable to advise the Committee how to get over a difficulty that does not exist. The only advice I can give you is to comply with the Order-in-Council and submit your accounts to the Auditor. I do think you are giving yourselves and us unnecessary trouble in the matter'.<sup>12</sup>

Few committees dared to complain officially about the Secretary's strongly worded directives, and those which did were invariably told



that 'It is ... Mr Pryde's duty to see that the funds placed at school committees' disposal by the Board are as far as possible faithfully expended'.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, as the Board's control over their expenditure tightened, the committees were forced to find more and more money for school projects from voluntary sources. The Board further accelerated the process with a decision in 1880 to reduce its grants to the committees at the same time that it retrenched teachers' salaries.<sup>14</sup> Some Board members felt that the cuts would be hard on committeemen but Pryde assured the Board that such was not the case because most committees adopted the policy of spending all that they received whether the expense was justified or not.<sup>15</sup> Be that as it may, the effect of smaller and more closely controlled grants was soon evident. In 1879, the school committees in Otago raised a total of £550 by way of voluntary contributions for school purposes. Four years later the figure had risen to £2,143.<sup>16</sup> With general retrenchment having taken place, Otago's committees were now required to be successful fund-raising bodies as well as being guardians of the local schools.

Furthermore, as more power accrued to the Board to oversee their expenditure, the committees found that they were being called to account for matters that had as much to do with the conduct of the schools as they had to do with the audit of monies. A typical example was Pryde's warning to the Otepopo School Committee after its school had been inspected in 1882. The Secretary cited an extract from the Inspection Report which read: 'The infant room and the boys' offices are inexcusably dirty. In all my experience I have never before seen so much rubbish and dirt on the floor of an Infant room. The Headmaster's room is cleaner, but the dust accumulated on the floor of this room cannot but be detrimental to the health of the children. The Committee appears to have made very inadequate provision for the cleaning of the school and the offices. The rooms are paid to be swept out once a week and washed once a quarter. They should certainly be swept every evening and washed once a month.'<sup>17</sup> He then added on his own volition, 'I need scarcely say that as a liberal allowance is made to committees for cleaning purposes, the Board expects the cleaning to be properly attended to and I would strongly recommend your Committee to give effect to the recommendations of Mr Goyen [the school inspector] regarding the proper cleaning of the school and offices'.<sup>18</sup> By this date, therefore, it had become clear that the committees in the province were not only expected to raise voluntary funds but they were also increasingly being required to supply service functions in accordance with standards laid down by Board officials. The inspectors' reports for

the period provide strong evidence for the conclusion that in most matters, the committees were now very much more at the beck and call of the Board than they had been in earlier years.

It was this development which in 1883 finally destroyed the hapless Dunedin Schools Committee. With its history of antipathy towards the Board, its jurisdiction over five large schools situated in a dense urban area, and its august record of committee membership, the Dunedin Schools Committee was not an authority that was inclined to submit tamely to direction by Board officials.<sup>19</sup> The Committee was a staunch defender of the rubric that 'committeemen are superior to Board members because they, and they alone, are the immediate representatives of the people'.<sup>20</sup> The Committee had its own paid secretary and it strove after 1877 to present itself as the spokesman for committee opinion in the province. Under the Act, the Committee's voting power was not of course commensurate with its size, but the Committee was hopeful that the economic value of city schools as income earners for the Board, plus the political stature of the Committee's members, would provide it with a satisfactory defence against the strictures of Mr Pryde.

After 1880, however, it became obvious that the Dunedin Committee's size and membership were no protection against the changed circumstances which confronted every school committee in the province. Size, which had already destroyed an attempt by the Committee to enforce the compulsory attendance clauses of the 1877 Act on a district of 25,000 people,<sup>21</sup> was not advantageous with respect to the fund raising that was required to supplement reduced grants from the Board. The Dunedin Committee was too far removed from the daily running of its schools to become closely involved with the parents and householders concerned with one individual school. The immediate result was that its record in gaining voluntary finance was poor, thus placing the Committee more than ever at the mercy of the Board.

Faced with these unpalatable facts, the Committee appealed increasingly to sectional arguments in order to justify its existence. In January 1880, it claimed that it was important for the city to have a strong committee to protect urban interests against those of rural districts,<sup>22</sup> and the press further believed that the maintenance of several large committees was the only way to check the power of the Board which had shown 'a determination ... to absorb, so far as practicable, in accordance with the letter rather than the spirit of the Act, all administrative functions of the committees'.<sup>23</sup> But the Dunedin public

seemed to be far from impressed with these arguments. Although about 300 people attended the Annual General Meeting of the Committee in January 1880, it turned out that the main topic of interest was an electoral battle between candidates of the 'Bible-in-School' and 'Freethought' Parties.<sup>24</sup> It was a matter of critical comment that the public showed little interest in topics of specific educational moment, but as the year wore on it became clear that the Committee itself had come to the conclusion that there was little of positive worth it could do for the schools.

Thomas Dick, the Committee's only remaining member of parliament, resigned from his committee position in March 1880, and by October of that year, morale among the committeemen had sunk so low that more than one member suggested that as a matter of self-respect, the Committee as a whole should refuse to serve after its term of office expired. Furthermore, in that same month a petition signed by thirty-five householders which asked that the city be divided into five separate school districts, was presented to the Board. It was claimed that smaller committees would bring people into closer contact with the management of local schools, strengthen the voting power of Dunedin City on the Board [five votes instead of one], and avoid 'the disgraceful partisanship i.e. Bible-in-Schools v Freethought shown at the last several annual meetings'.<sup>25</sup> The Board was favourably disposed towards the request but no immediate action was taken because the Board believed that local rating might soon have to be introduced by the government in all board districts. Had this occurred, there would have been no advantage in creating smaller committees.

By this date, at least one member of the Dunedin Schools Committee had publicly agreed that five smaller committees would best serve the interests of the city, but the chairman, Mr J. Robin, decided to make one last attempt to demonstrate the worth of the Committee as a spokesman for local educational administration in Otago. On 29 October 1880, a circular in Robin's name was sent to all school committees in Otago asking them to support two radical changes in appointments procedures, changes which would have had the effect of substantially reducing the influence of Pryde and the Board in the appointment of teachers.<sup>26</sup> Robin had deliberately centred his circular on a common grievance among committeemen and the great majority of the 60 committees which replied to the circular supported his stand. Most of the committees in the province, however, did not bother to reply to Robin's suggestions and the reason for the lack of enthusiasm displayed by many rural

committees appears to have been well illustrated by one critic who wrote: 'It is a pity to see that so many local committees have swallowed the Dunedin Schools Committee's line. The Dunedin Committees are strong enough already and it is not in the interests of country districts to make them stronger. There is no value to a country school committee in weakening the power of the Education Board. That body has had to make a determined stand between the grab-all propensities of the big town committees and the country districts.'<sup>27</sup> Clearly, as far as rural committees were concerned, the general dislike of Board officials was more than matched by their fear of being dominated by several large urban school committees. The Dunedin Committee was looked upon primarily as a representative of sectional interest and was not, therefore, able to act consistently as a leader of committee opinion in the province. The Board had no hesitation in rejecting Robin's petition outright.

Starved of finance and shattered in morale, the Dunedin Committee struggled on for a further two years, although it was ceasing to be taken seriously by either the Board or itself. It had little left to offer but noisy obstructive tactics and when the new Committee in 1882 was faced with yet another difference of opinion with the Board over the appointment of a teacher, one committeeman summed up the sense of the meeting when he concluded that it was 'useless to fight a superior power'.<sup>28</sup> By this date, moreover, the inability of the Committee to raise worthwhile sums of voluntary finance had become obvious to the public. The reductions in the Board's standard grant and the decline which took place in city rolls after the removal of infant children in 1881, had the combined effect of forcing the Committee to put urgently needed maintenance work to one side. The resulting inconveniences were a matter of increasingly sharp public comment and the position came to a head in January 1883, when Dr Maunsell, the Dunedin Health Officer, reported that many classrooms in the city were seriously overcrowded and that the sanitation in all schools was inadequate.

The Committee took a serious view of Maunsell's report but claimed that it could do little to repair the deficiencies until it received extra funds from the Board. The latter, however, replied that the Dunedin Committee had no right to claim special monetary privileges that were not granted to other school districts. In July 1883, the Committee decided that as the funds provided by the Board were not sufficient to enable them to undertake repairs to teachers' and janitors' residences, in addition to the repairs to the schools, they would inform the Board that henceforth they would decline to take responsibility for such repairs.<sup>29</sup>

The Board refused to countenance the suggestion that with its many schools and residences to supervise, the Committee had a special case. Its reply was direct and devastating. The Board resolved: 'That the Board regrets to learn that the Dunedin Schools Committee finds itself unable to perform its functions with a scale of payments which is found amply sufficient by other committees. Should the Committee decline to do any repairs shown to be required, it will be necessary to do the work and deduct the cost from the amounts payable to the Committee for the purpose.'<sup>30</sup> It would seem that the official scale of payments was not designed to service the needs of large committees, but whatever the merits of the Committee's case, the Board now clearly saw that the end of the Dunedin Schools Committee was near. At the Board meeting in July, one member commented, 'The time will come when we will need to have a washing up with the Dunedin Schools Committee and the sooner we have it the better [laughter:hear, hear]'.<sup>31</sup> Another believed that it was time that the 'City of Merchant Princes' put their hands in their pockets and paid something toward their own schools.<sup>32</sup>

In August, the Board decided again to consider splitting the Dunedin Schools District into five separate committee districts. The Secretary was asked to solicit information on school administration from other populous areas in New Zealand,<sup>33</sup> while at the same time the Board Chairmen, Professor Shand, published data that purported to show that the Dunedin Committee had been wasteful in its expenditure over the years. The Committee knew well that its days were numbered but it did not retire as gracefully as might have been expected. Committeemen vied with one another to describe Board members and officials as being incompetent, arrogant, self-conceited, and consumed with a desire to arrogate to themselves nearly all of the powers conferred on the committees by the Act.<sup>34</sup> H. Fish, a former Committee member, raised the matter in the national Legislature, and in October, a deputation from the Committee conferred with Thomas Dick, now the Minister of Education. Understandably, Dick was sympathetic, but he claimed that as the Act stood he was powerless in his official capacity to interfere in the matter. 'The Act', said Dick, 'simply provides that the government shall hand over the funds to the Board and the government has no power to say to the Board you must give so much to one school and so much to another'.<sup>35</sup> The Minister did not believe that this was at all satisfactory but he also took the view that on political grounds it would be most unwise to touch the Act in any way.<sup>36</sup>

Having exhausted these sources of support, the Dunedin Committee then organised a protest meeting of householders. All was to no avail, however, because in November 1883, the Board, with only two members dissenting, legislated the Committee out of existence and placed five single school committees in its stead. Predictably, the *Otago Daily Times* described this as a triumph for an Education Board 'that does not allow itself to be ruffled by either press or people',<sup>37</sup> and it construed the Board's action as an insult to the city. Judging by the mild public reaction however, it appears that the Board had guessed correctly that people were tired of a Committee that was more noted for its impotency than it was for its size and leadership. With the onset of retrenchment in 1880, the Committee had run into financial difficulties and accordingly, had lost much of its power and inclination to influence events. The following years had been but a postscript to that fact. The truth was that large committees with pretensions to grandeur were not compatible with the provisions of the 1877 Act, and in the end, despite their ritualistic protests, this appeared to be the conclusion of committeemen themselves. There was nothing to be gained by size if it was not matched by a genuine power of discretion.

By 1884, therefore, the centralization of the Board as a provincial educational authority was as complete as it would ever be. In this, the Board had been assisted first by the provisions of the Education Act, second by retrenchment and its consequent controls after 1880, and third by the indefatigable labours and the caustic pen of Mr Pryde. This was not to say that after the abolition of the Dunedin Schools Committee, school committee opinion in Otago was a spent political force. The opposite, in fact, was the case. In August 1884, the majority of committees in the Dunedin area agreed to meet regularly to discuss common problems, and in this manner the Dunedin and Suburban School Committees Conference was born. The Conference, which was to have a significant effect upon education politics in the province for the remainder of the nineteenth century, was unashamedly concerned to apply pressure on the Board and the government to bring about changes in education matters which the committee as a federated group regarded as being desirable. The Conference was in a much better position to do this than a single committee suffering under the strictures of Mr Pryde and the Board could ever have been. Everything, as far as the Conference was concerned, depended upon its leadership, and the Conference was fortunate in the first instance to find a brilliant leader in the person of Mark Cohen.

Cohen, who was later to prove himself to be one of Otago's noted educational spokesmen and administrators, was born in London in 1849 and educated at the Hebrew School in Melbourne. He came to Dunedin in 1863 where he began what was to be a lifetime career in newspaper journalism.<sup>38</sup> In January 1884, Cohen was elected as a member of the newly-created Union St. School Committee and thus commenced his services as an educational administrator. Subsequently he was to be Chairman of the Education Board and later, in 1912, chaired the Cohen Commission, the first major Royal Commission on Education in New Zealand.<sup>39</sup> Cohen was not only on talking and writing terms with most of the leading politicians of the day but he was also able to combine his political sophistication with a strain of educational radicalism which reached out and influenced all the organisations with which he was associated. Something of his effect could be judged from the first meeting of the Conference which passed recommendations for such things as better school committee election procedures, revised syllabus prescriptions, the appointment of truant officers, and the placement of school inspectors under the control of the Department.<sup>40</sup>

The Conference tended to be regarded by the rural districts as a new power bloc of urban committees in the place of the Dunedin Schools Committee. There was some justification for this suspicion because at its first meeting the Conference devoted a considerable amount of time to the advocacy of a ward system of Board representation which, the Conference felt, would be more equitable for the denser areas of population. Nevertheless, the Conference had at least as much chance as the Dunedin Committee had had, of acting as a voice for all school committees on such bones of contention as grants to committees and the appointment of teachers. By 1884, in fact, the appointments procedures had become the one area in which the committees had discovered that they could use their political power to refuse to allow the Board, and Mr Pryde in particular, to centralize the selection of teachers. Nevertheless it was true that sometimes the Secretary was still able to bully committees in matters of appointment. One committee, for example, which dared to suggest to Pryde that he advertise vacancies in Otago's schools in other provinces of New Zealand was smartly informed, 'I have to thank you for the information that there are numerous unemployed teachers in Wellington. Allow me to inform you in return that there are numerous unemployed teachers in Otago'.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, sometimes it was the Board's officials who were worsted in the jousting with committees. On one celebrated occasion the Board decided on the advice of its inspectors to dismiss the head teacher of the Otepopo

school. This did not suit the wishes of the school committee however, which much to the delight of the Dunedin press, unceremoniously locked Pryde and an inspector out of the school when they arrived to discuss the matter further.<sup>42</sup>

Public entertainment of this kind provided a graphic illustration of the fact that by 1884, the Board had failed to provide a workable system of promotion for teachers through the agency of the Board Office. The problem was that a promotion system seemed to imply centralized selection. And centralization seemed to require the yielding of choice to Pryde and the several inspectors. This, neither the committees, nor the teachers, nor finally the Board, members were prepared to give. As a rule, the committees were happy for the Secretary to continue to sponsor and vet applicants for positions who resided outside the province. This coincided with their general distrust of unknown 'outsiders' which had been a characteristic of Otago committees from provincial days. Furthermore, with its higher than average salaries (even after retrenchment) and generally superior teaching conditions, the province was not hard pressed to maintain its traditional exclusiveness. Plenty of 'outsiders' wished to come but few were chosen. Typically, their names appeared at the bottom of the selection lists sent to committees, and unless they had impressed the Board Secretary or local committeeman, their chances of success were remote. The following kind of comment from Pryde was common: 'Mr Yeats is very little known by the Board. He at present writes from Christchurch. He has received a University Education and has had considerable experience in teaching. He was in Dunedin for a short time some years ago but did not succeed in getting on to any employment. His testimonials speak highly of his ability as a teacher but there is no reference to moral character and the Board has not been able to get information on the point.'<sup>43</sup>

The Secretary did nevertheless maintain his policy of recruiting applicants from Victoria and until 1882 few teachers from this source had difficulty in obtaining positions in Otago. As the teaching supply began to balance out with market demand, however, public criticism of 'needy Victorian adventurers' coming from a colony 'swarming with *genus dominorum*'<sup>44</sup> became more evident. As early as 1880, Pryde was accused of allowing 'Victorianism' to influence his recommendations for the appointment of a Headmaster of the newly-constructed George St. School. One of the unsuccessful applicants was D. Stenhouse, one of Otago's most respected teachers, while the appointee was a recently



arrived Victorian teacher. The evidence clearly indicates that on this, as on other occasions, the Board Secretary was anything but impartial in his assessments of the candidates whose names were submitted to the school committee for its choice. Stenhouse, whose name headed the list, was damned with faint praise. He was described as being 'a faithful teacher and excellent organiser who works particularly well with assistants, parents and the committee'.<sup>45</sup> But he was also portrayed as a teacher who worked his pupils for too many hours and who set lessons that were too severe. His pupils, whose progress was 'sure though slow' were alleged to revere rather than like him.<sup>46</sup> With respect to the ultimately successful, candidate, however, the Secretary almost ran dry of superlatives. He concluded his assessment with the comment that 'Mr McNicholl is distinguished by fine manly and honourable sentiments and he has always imparted to his pupils a very high tone'.<sup>47</sup> Although the Board was sufficiently troubled by public charges of 'favouritism' in this particular appointment to agree to hold an inquiry, no significant remedial action was taken.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, instances like this lent weight to the day when the Secretary would finally be humbled and appointments would no longer seemingly be influenced by the Board's officers.

This came about with the occurrence of the celebrated 'Farnie Case' in 1882. In April of that year, the Board appointed Mr P. Goyen as an additional inspector for the Otago district. Goyen, who had come to New Zealand from Victoria, was employed at the time of his appointment as an inspector for the Southland Education Board. He was not well known in Otago but he had the good fortune to be Pryde's brother-in-law. Since the vacancy for an additional inspector in Otago had not been advertised, and since an obvious familial relationship between the new inspector and the Secretary did exist, many critics believed that the Board had been guilty of gross nepotism. Some teachers were bitterly outspoken in their complaints about the appointment, and one of these was I.C.Farnie, a promising young teacher at the Normal School. Expressing the anger of many teachers in the province, Farnie wrote an unsigned letter to the *Otago Daily Times* in which he savagely criticised Goyen's qualifications for the position to which he had been appointed. Farnie concluded by claiming that the Board's tendency towards 'Victorianism' was only too evident.<sup>49</sup> Pryde discovered by devious means that Farnie was the author of the letter, and the Secretary reported the fact to the Board. The Board thereupon demanded that Farnie make a full retraction of, and an apology for, his

public criticism of Goyen's appointment. When Farnie refused he was dismissed from his position in the Board's service.<sup>50</sup>

The Board justified its extreme action on the grounds that it could not allow its authority to be ridiculed in public by a subordinate employee. It argued: 'The Board has no desire to limit the right of teachers to take part in public discussions provided that the subject of discussion and the manner of carrying it out are not inconsistent with their public engagements .... The Board, however, emphatically denies that a teacher so long as he remains in the Board's service, is entitled to take part publicly in a discussion, the subject of which is the qualifications of his own superior officers, whether that officer be a headmaster or an Inspector .... If the whole education service is not to become demoralised the Board has no alternative but to uphold this principle.'<sup>51</sup>

Despite strong objections from the OEI, the Board upheld its decision to dismiss Farnie although it was thereafter subjected to a barrage of unfavourable criticism from both within and without the province. One of the most bitter comments came from a northern newspaper which considered it disgraceful that 'the members of an honourable and learned profession are to be gagged and rendered speechless, in order that the gentlemen who constitute the Dunedin Board may trample upon the rights of teachers and elevate their friends to offices of emolument with impunity'.<sup>52</sup> It soon became clear, in fact, that the press and the public were interested as much in the substance of Farnie's claims as they were in the general question of whether a teacher was entitled to utter public criticisms. And the truth of Farnie's specific charges was hard to deny.

As early as 1880, when the Board had decided that the appointment of a third inspector would be desirable, the *Otago Daily Times* had expressed the hope that the new vacancy would not just be a 'job for the boys'.<sup>53</sup> The retrenchment which took place in that year put an end to the proposal for the time being, but in April 1882, without any further publicity, the Board had simply written to Goyen offering him the job.<sup>54</sup> To make matters worse, three members of the Board who had been away attending the legislature in Wellington when the appointment was made, subsequently denied that they had played any part in allowing the Board to degenerate into 'a family party'.<sup>55</sup> The Board as a whole now became acutely sensitive to the fact that through Farnie's revelations, it had laid itself open to the suggestion that its policies were dictated by the desires of the Board Secretary. Board members felt that they were

bound by their earlier decisions to uphold both Goyen's appointment and Farnie's dismissal,<sup>56</sup> but they also sought to demonstrate to their critics that in future there would be no grounds for charges against Board officials of 'jobbery' in appointments.

Accordingly, in August 1882, the Board, on the recommendation of Professor Shand, virtually ceded all major powers of appointment in Otago to the school committees. From this date, the inspectors recorded their individual comments upon teachers at the foot and on the back of the teaching certificates held by the individual teachers. When applying for a position, the applicant was still required to submit his name to the Board but it was now also necessary for him to submit his name and certificate directly to the committee concerned.<sup>57</sup> The role of the Board in appointment procedures was therefore reduced to what it had been in provincial days. The Secretary's services were still called upon when information about 'outside' candidates was sought by the committees, but as long as applicants for positions possessed the minimal qualifications required by law, it was the committees which now selected the teachers. So it was that the 'Farnie Case' and the resulting change in methods of appointment constituted the one major check on the Board's consolidation of administrative power during these years.

What this meant for individual teachers was soon plain to see. In their attempts to centralise appointments, Pryde and the inspectors had drawn heavily upon Board records when making their recommendations on individual candidates to the committees. They had attempted to provide promotion for teachers who had served in small isolated schools and their judgments had been framed in accordance with information contained in a 'Character Book' that was accessible only to the Secretary, the inspectors, and [on occasion] Board members.<sup>58</sup> Typical of the entries in the Character Book was the following:

Name:	Cossgrove David
Age:	27 years 1879
Class:	E.3
Position:	Master Sandymount School
Salary:	
History:	Entered Board's service 1874: Has no previous Training or experience. Promoted 2 <sup>nd</sup> Asst. Arthur St. August 1880.
Inspection Reports:	Mr Cosgrove has taught the 4 <sup>th</sup> std. class in the Arthur St. School with success. He is most painstaking and attentive. His methods are suitable and successful but hardly skilful. He has excellent control and very considerable influence over the pupils whose work has been marked by great neatness. D.P. 12/1/83 <sup>59</sup>

The school committees had long been incensed that information in the Character Book was not available for their perusal and this had been the burden of complaint in the protest which the chairman of the Dunedin Schools Committee had circulated to committees throughout the province in 1880. With the new system of appointments, however, the Character Book was no longer required nor desired. Both the Board and the committees felt happier with the thought that officials were not privy to special information and the Character Book was therefore abandoned early in 1883. Thereafter, whenever the Secretary saw fit to make any remarks about a candidate he took good care to ensure that his written comment was descriptive and strictly neutral in tone.<sup>60</sup>

As far as can be ascertained from their public comments, the teachers, like the committees, appear to have been relieved that the Secretary was no longer making comments with respect to individual applicants such as 'He has not proved a success as a teacher' or 'He is somewhat eccentric in character'. On the other hand, the teachers were now completely at the mercy of the parochial whims of the school committees, and this was not what the 1877 Act had intended. The immediate fault lay with the ambiguous Clause 45 in the Act but in addition to this, Bowen's attempt to provide for a national classification of teachers which would guide boards and committees in making appointments, had also failed to be effective. In 1879 Habens introduced a classification system which differentiated teachers according to their formal qualifications and length of teaching service. As far as the Otago Board was concerned, however, the classifications of individual teachers by the Inspector-General were made largely upon paper qualifications and service, neither of which often fitted closely with actual positions of responsibility held. Accordingly, while the Board was prepared to base its 'bonus' payments to teachers upon their individual classifications, it quickly decided that an applicant's classification position would be a relatively minor factor in determining all but senior appointments.

The point was stated formally in February 1880 when a teacher complained to the Board that a position for which he had been an applicant had been filled by a candidate who held a lower classification position than himself. The Board replied that in its view the classification system was intended to provide a minimum qualification only. It was not, therefore, incumbent upon either the Board or the committees to give precedence to a candidate with the highest classification. One Board member bluntly stated that just because a person had a higher classification position, it did not follow that he was

the better teacher,<sup>61</sup> and this was also the view that Pryde took in his evaluation of candidates as long as he was free so to do. The least favoured applicant [not the poorest classified] for an important position in a large city school in May 1880 for example, was described as follows: 'Mr Steven is at present Master at Kaitangata School. He is a man of fair education and has obtained a good position in the recent classification but his school is not successfully managed.'<sup>62</sup> When the committees gained virtual control over appointments after 1882 therefore, there was no particular reason for them to feel bound to abide closely by the classification system when they were engaged upon the task of selecting teachers.

Instead, the common factors which influenced selection were an applicant's success in 'buttonholing' committeemen, and his record of proven efficiency as a teacher. The first of these requirements brought most unfair advantages to those applicants who could 'muster the greatest number of influential relations' but the second carried graver educational consequences. In the absence after 1882 of any positive recommendations from Board officials, and with little importance being placed upon the national classification system, committeemen fell back on the examination pass rates achieved by the teachers in the classrooms as being the best means by which the 'efficiency' of respective candidates could be judged. As a result, the teachers in the province were tied more closely than ever to the grim task of making an unworkable syllabus the route to producing a satisfying percentage of successful pupils in the annual examinations. It soon became apparent that those teachers who were without 'friends' and who were not 'good percentage pass men' stood a poor chance of gaining a desirable teaching post.

The Board itself did nothing in practical terms to alleviate the treadmill of the percentage pass results. Indeed, after 1880 it added to the difficulty. From that year it required the inspectors to report especially to the Board on all schools in which the annual examination pass rate of standards pupils in the school was less than fifty per cent. Soon, many teachers, especially those in country districts, became familiar with official letters which read in part: 'The Board having instructed its Inspectors to report all cases where the 'Passes' were below 50 per cent., Mr Inspector Petrie has handed to me, for the information of the Board, the enclosed report on his recent examination of your school .... I have to request that you will furnish me, at your earliest convenience, with any explanation you may care to make in the matter ....'<sup>63</sup> At the very least these teachers would find their work

being advertised as below standard in the Board's annual reports; often they would receive a further letter informing them that they had been dismissed. The teacher who did not seek promotion therefore could not escape the percentage pass judgment. If insufficient numbers of pupils in the schools succeeded in pleasing the inspector, the teachers concerned, could find themselves without employment.

The Board's interpretation of 'efficiency' thus explicitly followed the criteria laid down by the Department and further stated by one of the Board's own inspectors in 1880: '... the school with the lowest average age and the highest percentage of passes in the same standards is the most efficient ....a high average age and low percentage of passes indicates a school of the opposite character.'<sup>64</sup> The bureaucratic niceties of this argument were consistent with the openly experienced official view that 'teachers in New Zealand should not be trusted with discretionary power',<sup>65</sup> but the result was that by 1880, Habens' 'standards', originally designed to define minimum levels of achievement, had come to determine all that took place in Otago's schools. No teacher dared to step outside the syllabus prescriptions no matter how inadequate or unsuitable he found them to be. To have done so, would have been to invite the certain wrath of the inspectors and the public alike. In an atmosphere which was described by one critic as being one in which 'the inspector ransacks his brains for new and unthought-of methods of attack, while the teacher prepared equally unheard-of methods of defence',<sup>66</sup> success came to those teachers whose classes or schools gained a high percentage of passes, a percentage which would be published in the local newspaper for all to note.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, a teacher whose examination results were mediocre would be left in no doubt by the inspector, the school committee and the Board as to the extent to which he was required to improve. Again, if the inspector reported that 'the teacher allows talking, his pupils are given to tittering and giggling, tone unsatisfactory',<sup>68</sup> the erring teacher knew that he was expected to ensure in future that the children in his classes would be dutifully silent.

Having endorsed a method of accountability that placed a heavy premium upon examination results, the Board and its inspectors had to deal as best they could with the manifold instances in which teachers reacted in predictable but undesirable ways to the reward system that had been established. Overt dishonesty was easily recognised by the Board for what it was and handled accordingly. Cases of teachers fraudulently altering the examination results, or of bribing dull children

to stay away from school on examination day were not unknown and they were dealt with severely by the Board. The inspectors also complained that the widespread practice among Otago teachers of keeping children in the preparatory classes [or primers] until they showed some sign of being able to cope with standards work bordered upon malpractice because it was designed to make the examination record of a school look better than it really was. The Board was reluctant to rule on the matter, however, first because prior to 1884 <sup>69</sup> the regulations did not require the examination of preparatory classes and second, because it did not feel competent to adjudicate a counterclaim by teachers that promotion from the preparatory classes was a decision taken by a teacher on professional grounds. Once this and other matters were cast in the guise of a 'professional dispute', the Board's favoured policy was to leave them to be worked out by the inspectors and teachers concerned

Unfortunately, the inspectors seemed to be no more able to understand than were Board members that most of the 'unintelligent teaching practices' which they criticised were attributable at least in part to large classes and the examination system. They were not uncritical of some of the detail of Habens' syllabus, but they were slower to appreciate that it was the official criteria of 'efficiency' that constituted the graver obstacle. In 1883, for example, Petrie expressed surprise upon finding that in nearly half of the schools he examined, the early lessons in geography were crammed and not taught. He added, 'The discovery of this fact gave me a very painful shock, for I cherished the belief that very few teachers would knowingly subordinate the educative training of their scholars to the mere scoring of passes at an examination'.<sup>70</sup> The wonder is that it took Petrie so long to find out that cramming was not a weakness associated with a weak or lazy teacher but rather the inevitable corollary of a policy of evaluation pursued by himself and supported by the Board, the Department, and the school committees.

It was inevitable too that the 'driving' in Otago schools which had attracted unfavourable comment in 1878 and 1879 continued to be the dominant feature of school life. This was especially the case with the widespread employment of corporal punishment which was viewed by some critics as being the necessary accompaniment of large classes, an unrealistic syllabus, and the importance attached to examination results. As one commentator put it, '... the inspector's sting on the master's conscience is eased by increased canings'.<sup>71</sup> This also appears to have

been the view of the Board, which although it possessed a regulation governing corporal punishment practices,<sup>72</sup> made no attempt to police the matter until its hand was forced by several notorious cases which ended in court action.

In November 1880, a lady teacher at the William Street School was charged in the Dunedin Police Court with injuring the hand of one of the boys in her class. It transpired on the teacher's own admission that she had given the boy 23 strokes of the cane and although the Magistrate dismissed the charge through lack of evidence of actual bodily injury, the press took a serious view of the circumstances revealed.<sup>73</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* reported that it had found that despite the Board's regulation, all of the teachers at the William St. School caned and strapped their pupils.<sup>74</sup> It urged the Board to take action but, the learned magistrate having passed judgment, the Board seemed happy to avoid having to take any significant steps of its own. It adopted the same stance towards repeated complaints that pupil-teachers in the city schools were in the habit of administering corporal punishment<sup>75</sup> but it finally had to declare its position when the 'Dunback Flogging Case' occurred in May 1884.

A parent took the young teacher at the Dunback School to court on the charge that the punishment which the teacher had administered to the parent's son was needlessly severe and degrading. The boy, who in the teacher's view was guilty of lying, was first forced to kneel down and beg the pardon of the other boys in the class. He was then hoisted on the back of another boy and flogged by the teacher until the carrier dropped him from his back. After this he was placed astride a long desk, made to leap along it, and was flogged every time he leapt. According to the evidence of other pupils present during this period of 'Riding the Donkey', the boy received 30 strokes of the cane. The boy's father reported that his son had arrived home bruised and discoloured around his loins and back. The teacher did not dispute the facts that were presented, claiming that he had intended to give the boy only 24 lashes but admitting that he may have administered more than that number. He added that he regarded the punishment as being one that was appropriate and he denied that 'Riding the Donkey' could be denoted as a degrading form of punishment. He claimed that he had learned it when he was a pupil-teacher at the Dunedin Middle School under the charge of Mr Barrett, one of Otago's foremost Headmasters.<sup>76</sup>

The magistrate hearing the case did not find the teacher guilty but he left the court in no doubt that he disapproved of the punitive methods



employed on this occasion. He suggested that the school committees and the Education Board look very closely at the whole question of corporal punishment in Otago's schools.<sup>77</sup> But press comment was more outspoken. It condemned 'the disgraceful display by the young schoolmaster', and looked forward with confidence to 'the steps that the authorities will take to ensure that future outrages like this are impossible in our public schools'.<sup>78</sup> Sensing that some action on its part was at last required, the Board held a further inquiry of its own into the Dunback affair, and as a result the teacher was censured and suspended from duty for two months.<sup>79</sup> The Board would not agree, however, that the circumstances made it imperative for the corporal punishment regulations to be tightened. In the Board's view, individual instances of irresponsible punishments were not a sufficient justification for greater restrictions being placed upon the actions of all teachers in the province's classrooms.<sup>80</sup>

This was also the position to which the Board adhered in the face of considerable comment that there was a causal relationship between the incidence of brutal punishment in Otago's schools and the fact that poorly prepared teachers had to cope with overcrowded classes and an unrealistic syllabus.<sup>81</sup> The Board was not inclined to dispute the general proposition that better trained teachers and a more appropriate syllabus were to be desired, but it took the view that it had a limited statutory responsibility for providing for such developments. As far as teacher training was concerned, the Board could claim by 1884 that apart from encouraging teachers to seek qualifications through the 'bonus' system of payment, it had taken some steps to improve the quality of professional preparation in the province.

In 1883, the Board amended its pupil-teacher regulations in response to criticisms that pupil-teachers were the victims of cheap sweated labour practices and were subjected to useless examinations. The minimum age for a pupil teacher in the province was raised to fourteen, the examination syllabus was modified, and annual practical tests in teaching efficiency were required of all apprentice teachers. Since the new 'practical tests' meant that it was now necessary for an inspector to see an apprentice actually teaching once every year, it was hoped that the regulations would encourage 'head teachers to pay more attention to training pupil teachers to fit them for the important positions they occupy'.<sup>82</sup> The new regulations were the Board's legislative answer to charges that the drudgery to which pupil-teachers were subjected, and the abuses of the corporal punishment regulations which they

sometimes committed, were due as much to the laziness of master teachers as they were to economic demands that maximum utilisation be made of poorly-paid junior staff. The Board did not claim that the pupil-teacher system was the best form of professional preparation possible, but it believed that under the circumstances it had done all that was within its power to encourage the growth of a qualified teaching service through worthwhile forms of apprenticeship training.

The case with the maintenance of the Dunedin Training College [or Normal School]<sup>83</sup> was similar, although the Board's attitude toward this particular institution tended to be more indifferent in the years surveyed by this chapter. The Training College had been established by the Provincial Government in 1875. After 1877, the College was left under the formal control of the Board although it was specially funded by the central authority. Under new regulations laid down in 1880, the College was open without further examination to all pupil-teachers who had completed their period of apprenticeship, to students who could pass a special entrance examination, or to students who were specially recommended by the inspectors. The majority of the students were awarded bursaries of some kind, and instruction was free except for those persons who would not sign a bond promising to teach in a public school in the colony for two years after the completion of their training. Many of the students were provided with opportunities to undertake university study concurrently with their training college work, while those with lesser qualifications were prepared either for the Matriculation Examination or for the Teachers' E and D Certificate Examinations which were conducted by the Education Department. Apart from this, all students received lectures on teaching method along with opportunities for practice teaching in the Normal School. In a very real sense, therefore, the Dunedin Training College was designed to provide not only a preparation in classroom technique but also free secondary education and cheap access to university studies.

After 1877, however, the College was handicapped by the fact that it remained outside the daily concern of teachers, inspectors, and educational administrators in the province. Perhaps its greatest contribution was to provide a few extra university students who would not otherwise have been able to attend classes at that institution, but at no time prior to 1884 did the total number of students at the College rise above 60 in any one year. Moreover, few students completed the full two-year course, which the College was designed to provide, and until 1882, there was no evidence to suggest that either the Board or its

inspectors had given any close attention to the desirability of linking the College effectively with the teaching profession in the province. Because it was funded by the government, the College cost the Board very little from the Board's own regular income,<sup>84</sup> while the inspectors, who had no right of entry to the College under the regulations of 1880, had no incentive to regard the College in a positive or sympathetic way. As far as they were concerned, the Training College was a luxury that was of limited immediate value to the province.

In 1882, Petrie openly questioned the usefulness of a training college that seemed to exist in splendid isolation from the schools. In his report on the work of the previous year, he wrote, 'It would be a boon to have a well-conducted and efficient model school in connection with the Training College. It would do a lot to form opinion on lesson preparation and kindred subjects but so far as I can judge, that institution has not exercised any notable influence in this direction'.<sup>85</sup> The Board finally acted and established a special Committee to inquire into the conduct and efficiency of the Training College and its staff. The Committee, which reported back to the Board on 17 August 1882, regarded almost every aspect of the College's work as being unsatisfactory. It was particularly disturbed to find that of those students who had sat the Teachers' Certificate Examinations at the beginning of 1882, only three out of the ten candidates from the College had passed the D Certificate, and only three out of eighteen, the E Certificate.<sup>86</sup> As far as the Committee was concerned, this was a sure sign of inefficiency.

As a result of the Committee's findings and recommendations, new College regulations were adopted by the Board in October 1882. Changes included a tightening of the entrance test to the College, the separation of the staff into 'methods' instructors and 'academic' tutors, the provision of several scholarships for full time attendance at the university, the establishment of a model school, and the opening of the College to regular visitation from the inspectors. With the closer supervision provided for by the new regulations and the greater attention given to staffing for 'methods' teaching, the Board hoped that the College would cease to be 'spoken of in a slighting fashion throughout the province'.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact remained that an improved training college could benefit only a small number of teachers in Otago in the immediate future. It was for this reason that although the Board was prepared to revise its pupil-teacher and Training College regulations in order to

promote long-term professional growth among its teachers, it remained convinced that its first responsibility was to ensure that a minimal standard of teaching efficiency was immediately attained in all of the schools under its jurisdiction. Hence the fact that the Board's concern with promoting the professional development of teachers was more than outweighed by the increasing reliance which it placed upon the 'standards' examinations as a measure of teaching efficiency. To those critics who pointed to undesirable consequences such as cramming and corporal punishment which they claimed were the product of the examination system, and who argued that the ends of education would be better served by 'first exercising great care in the choice of teachers and then reposing full confidence in them',<sup>88</sup> the Board's answer by implication from its practice was devastatingly simple. It did not believe that the majority of its teachers could be trusted with more professional discretion and less examination in their work.

Things were not made any easier for the teachers by the Board's tardiness to believe that in terms of the 1877 Act it had any responsibility to make submissions about the obvious inadequacies of the national school syllabus. In spite of increasing criticism that the syllabus was doomed to fail because it was framed by a person 'who had never had the practical experience of a teacher of the young',<sup>89</sup> the Board did nothing to encourage the Inspector-General to develop a closer working contact with the schools. In January 1880, Pryde wrote to the Minister of Education: 'This Board having learned that communications in reference to Educational matters in this District have been passing between the Inspector-General and the Officers [inspectors] of this Board, directs its Officers for the future to communicate only with the Board or its Secretary in connection with such matters ....'<sup>90</sup> As far as the Board was concerned, the preservation of its autonomy as an educational authority was still a more important consideration than were procedures that might have helped to remedy syllabus difficulties through consultation among the authorities directly concerned. Habens responded by being even more circumspect in his dealings with the inspectors of the district and in his replies to various complaints from individual school committees and from organisations like the Otago Educational Institute. For this reason, the process of syllabus reform was unnecessarily retarded.

Nevertheless, as a public body, the Board was compelled by pressure of public opinion to begin to endorse calls for syllabus changes which were increasingly heard between 1880 and 1884. Recommendations

urging modification in the syllabus were passed annually by the Otago Educational Institute between 1880 and 1883, and on each occasion the Board was urged to provide its support for reforms. In June 1882, the Dunedin Schools Committee, which had earlier considered the matter of overwork in the schools to be serious enough to invite two headmasters to address it on the syllabus,<sup>91</sup> resolved: 'That at the forthcoming conference of the Otago Educational Institute the teachers be requested to draw up a workable syllabus for the schools with a view to the Dunedin Schools Committee forwarding it to the Minister of Education.'<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, in the same month, the Port Chalmers School Committee asked the Board to press in a similar direction.<sup>93</sup> As a result, the Board did agree in July 1882 to transmit to the Minister of Education a series of resolutions on the syllabus which had been passed by the Educational Institute.<sup>94</sup> The Board made it very clear on this occasion, however, that it was acting simply as an agent and was not attempting to endorse the Institute's views as being its own.

Nevertheless, it was not long before the Board took its first positive stand on syllabus reform. In July 1882, the Board was asked by the Westland Education Board to comment upon a series of recommendations for syllabus changes which that authority proposed to submit to the Minister. The Board passed the matter over to its inspectors who reported back on the matter in February 1883. The inspectors agreed with most of the Westland Board's proposals which included a reduction in the content of a number of syllabus prescriptions, examinations in some subjects on a 'class' rather than an 'individual' basis,<sup>95</sup> and the setting of a minimum number of attendances before a child would be required by law to be presented for annual examination in the standards.<sup>96</sup> The endorsement of these proposals, which were far more radical than the changes that had been suggested by the Otago Educational Institute, was of considerable significance when it came from the Board's inspectors who by nature were cautious men. Equally illuminating was their concluding comment: 'We venture to express regret that representatives of the Department which frames all regulations applying to elementary schools have so little opportunity of gaining an intimate acquaintance with the detailed working of the vast and important machinery whose activities they direct. But for this isolation it would probably be unnecessary for boards of education to urge upon the Department such alterations as are here recommended.'<sup>97</sup> The inspectors' report, which was adopted in its entirety by the Board and transmitted to the Westland Authority,<sup>98</sup> thus constituted the first official recognition in Otago of the possibility that the structure of

educational administration which had been designed in 1877 to suit political circumstances might well prove to be inimical to future educational progress. Since the Board itself had gone out of its way to ensure that the Education Department remained isolated from the schools, it could not be said that its acceptance of its inspectors' recommendations in 1883 constituted an overnight conversion. But it was a straw in the wind.

By the end of 1884, the Board was in fact well placed to begin to play a more positive role in promoting educational change. Up to that point its success had lain largely in consolidating its power as an administrative authority and in ensuring through its political lobbying that Otago received a generous share of the national revenue available for schooling. With the abolition of an apparently strong rival authority like the Dunedin Schools Committee, and with the introduction of stronger audit regulations, greater executive discretion had undoubtedly been granted to the Secretary and to other senior officials of the Board. Not only did they use their increased powers to direct school committee business more closely but the evidence also suggests that it was the Secretary and the inspectors who were primarily responsible for such educational decisions as those which resulted in amendments to the pupil-teacher and the Training College regulations. It was true that during the period 1878-1884, the members of the Board had shown themselves to be much less confident in dealing with 'professional' matters than they were with questions that related to finance and the provision of schools. Nevertheless, as long as the Department continued to provide only a minimal degree of educational leadership, there was no necessary reason for the Board to maintain its policy of entrusting decisions to its paid officials. What the Board needed, and what it had not so far shown, was a sense of confidence in its own ability to participate in educational decision-making and an awareness that as a public body it owed responsibility to public opinion in the province as a whole.

The indirect electoral system did little to help the Board in this respect. The election of new members to the Board occurred infrequently and between 1880 and 1884 only one sitting member was voted out of office. Comments about the Board members being 'elderly ladies' or about it being 'harder to get off the Board than to get on it' were not, therefore, without some justification and they appear to have been instigated by a suspicion that the Board was not as popular an authority as might have been desired. In no sense could the circularising

of school committees by respective candidates be described as public electioneering, and the truth was that the Board was legally responsible not to the public but rather to the school committees which had their own particular brands of parochialism. Initially, the system of election by school committees which had been introduced by Bowen's Act, had produced what many had regarded as a satisfying continuity in the educational administration of the province. By 1884, however, such feelings had given way to a sometimes openly expressed fear that somehow and in manifold devious ways, Pryde and the inspectors were manipulating the newly-accrued district authority of the Board to suit their own purposes.

This concern was clearly evident in the reaction of both the committees and the teachers to Pryde's attempts to establish a centralised procedure of appointments and promotions. It was a concern, furthermore, that appeared to critics to be fully justified when the Farnie Case became a matter of public debate in 1882. In January 1884, however, a new and significant political constraint upon the discretion of its officials was introduced into Board proceedings. In that month, a new Board member, the ebullient John McKenzie [later Minister of Lands in the Seddon Government],<sup>99</sup> moved in open meeting that all of the Board officials be dismissed and that new and fewer appointments be made. McKenzie's argument was that there were more than enough officials to do the work required, that Goyen's appointment had clearly been 'made for the man', and that the officials and some members constituted 'a ring on the Board'.<sup>100</sup> Although his motion lapsed for want of a seconder, McKenzie was astute enough to realise that the non-public form of elections to the Board, and a notorious appointment scandal, had made the charge of manipulation by officials a difficult one to refute. By acting as he did, McKenzie introduced a political tactic that was to be used repeatedly by aspiring candidates for Board election in the years to come. Meanwhile, his remarks constituted a warning to Pryde and the inspectors to tread lightly in the Board's name.

On balance it would seem fair to conclude that since most of the charges against him were not proven, much of the criticism to which Pryde was subjected prior to 1884 was little more than suspicion that was easily aroused when a permanent official had to make decisions that could not await the attention of the monthly meeting of the Board. Nevertheless, the positive force of McKenzie's motion was that the Board, as a Board, should be seen by the public to be a policy-making body and not a plaything in the hands of officials. As an argument, this

was a timely reminder indeed. In the years that lay immediately ahead, the Board, along with its counterparts in other districts, was not only going to be called upon to defend its right to exist but it was also going to be required to marshal public opinion to protect public education from economy-minded ministries. To do this successfully, the Board needed to do more than rely upon its officials to make important educational decisions.

## NOTES

1. AJHR 1881 Vol 1 E-1 p.104 Circ 28 July 1880
2. In the 1877 Act clause 83 defined 'school age' as between five and fifteen. After 1881 payment was still made on children over fifteen.
3. NZPD Vol 36 1880 p.512
4. ODT 6 Aug 1880
5. *Ibid* 25 Mar 1880
6. OEB Report 1880 p.5
7. AJHR 1881 Vol 2 E-1 p.14
8. *Morning Herald* 17 Dec 1881
9. OEB LB 26 1883/4 Memo Nov 1883 p.731
10. ODT 9 July 1881
11. AJHR 1884 Vol 1 E-1 p.108
12. OEB LB 26 1883/4 Pryde/Livingstone Sch Cte 12 Jan 1884 p.1001
13. *Ibid* 21 1879/80 Fulton/Duntroon Sch Cte 26 Feb 1880 p.592
14. ODT 6 Aug 1880
15. *Ibid*
16. OEB Report 1882 p.8
17. OEB LB 25 1882/3 Pryde/Otepopo Sch Cte 15 Aug 1882 p.125
18. *Ibid*
19. In 1880 the accommodation available at the five large schools controlled by the D.S.C. was William Street 599, Arthur Street 788, Union Street 1200, Albany Street 707, George Street 1000. During these years two small schools which had also been controlled by the D.S.C. were closed down. OEB LB 21 1879/80 p.909
20. R.Laishley 1881. Quoted in I.A.Cumming, *Glorious Enterprise* 1959 Christchurch Whitcombe & Tombs p.114
21. 1877 Act [clauses 89-95]
22. ODT 26 Jan 1880
23. *Ibid*
24. *Ibid* 28 Jan 1880
25. *Ibid*
26. ODT 27 Jan 1881
27. *Tuapeka Times* 23 Nov 1880
28. ODT 2 Feb 1882



29. *Ibid* 17 July 1883
30. OEB LB 1883 Pryde/James 19 July 1883 p.336
31. ODT 20 July 1883
32. *Ibid*
33. OEB LB 26 1883 p.473
34. ODT 21 Aug 1883
35. *Ibid* 12 Oct 1883
36. *Ibid*
37. *Ibid*
38. *Encyclopedia of New Zealand* Vol 1 p.373
39. The claim 'first' is to be read in the sense of total review of the administrative structure of state education in New Zealand.
40. ODT 26 1883/4 Pryde/Otepopo Sch Cte 20 Dec 1883 p. 930
41. OEB LB 22 1880/1 Pryde/Oamaru Sch Cte p.181
42. *Ibid* 26 1883/4 Pryde/Otepopo Sch Cte 20 Dec 1883 p. 930
43. *Ibid* 21 1879/80 Pryde/Oamaru Sch Cte 29 May p. 1031
44. ODT 25 Jan 1883
45. OEB LB 21 1879/80 Pryde/James D.S.C. 2 Dec p. 269
46. *Ibid*
47. *Ibid*
48. ODT 31 July 1880
49. *Ibid*
50. *Ibid* 24 April 1882
51. OEB LB 24 1881/2 Pryde/Farnie 12 June 1882 pp. 969-972
52. *New Zealand Mail* 15 Nov 1882
53. ODT 24 June 1880
54. OEB LB 24 1881/2 Pryde/Goyen 20 Apr 1882 p.743
55. ODT 20 Oct 1882
56. Farnie was in fact soon allowed to be re-employed in the Board's services.
57. ODT 18 Aug 1882
58. The 'Character Book' was so closely guarded that it required a key to unlock the covers before it could be read.
59. OEB Records Character Book
60. For example, 'Mr Allnutt served his apprenticeship as a pupil-teacher at Talbot in Victoria and entered this Board's service in 1882'. OEB LB 27 1884 Pryde/Caversham Sch Cte 10 June 1884 p.677
61. ODT 27 Feb 1880
62. OEB LB 21 1879/80 Pryde/James D.S.C. 2 Dec 1879 p.269
63. *Ibid* 21 1879/80 Pryde/Teacher Cambrians Sch 6 Apr 1880 p.743
64. AJHR 1880 Vol 2 H-1 p.41
65. OEB Report 1881 p.25
66. ODT 28 April 1884

67. The following is an example of an Examination Report published in the press. ODT 16 Nov 1881. *Outram School* The following is the general report and examination results of the above school after examination by Inspector Taylor on October 19th and 20th 1881.

General Report: This school continues to be efficiently managed. The work is well advanced and well known, showing that the instruction has been careful, intelligent and effective. The pupils are orderly, attentive and do their work honestly and show an intelligent acquaintance with their different subjects of study. The whole circumstances(sic) are satisfactory, and the singing, sewing, object lessons and drill receive excellent attention.

Summary of results:

Std.	On Roll	Presented	Passed	%
I	19	15	15	79
II	15	15	13	87
III	23	23	20	87
IV	16	16	14	88
V	8	8	8	100
VI	7	7	7	100

68. AJHR 1883 Vol 2 E-1B pp. 35-36
69. The regulations were changed in that year to require inspectors to report on the work of preparatory classes. *New Zealand Gazette* No 71 19 June 1884
70. OEB Report 1883 p.30
71. ODT 3 May 1882
72. The Board regulations on Corporal Punishment read as follows: 'While not prohibiting corporal punishment, the Board enjoins teachers to have recourse to it sparingly and with due deliberation, and authorizes it to be inflicted only by Head-teachers, and Acting Head-teachers of Schools. Under no circumstances will a pupil-teacher be allowed to inflict corporal punishment'. OEB Report 1895 App[endices] M. p.105
73. ODT 16 Nov 1880
74. *Ibid* 18 Nov 1880
75. *Ibid* 8 May 1883
76. *Ibid* 28 May 1884
77. *Ibid*
78. *Ibid* 2 June 1884
79. *Ibid* 20 June 1884
80. *Ibid* 22 Aug 1884
81. *Ibid* 5 June 1884
82. OEB Report 1884 App. G. p.39

83. The titles 'Training College' and 'Normal School' were used interchangeably during these years. For purposes of clarity the stipulated definition in this study is *Training College* meaning the adult institution and *Normal School*, a regular school which provided opportunities for practice teaching by students. In 1879, for example, the Training College cost the Board only £241 out of its ordinary grant income. The rest was paid for by a special government grant. OEB LB 21 1879/80 p.621
85. OEB Report 1881 App F p.27
86. OEB LB 25 1881/82 pp. 133-134
87. ODT 20 Oct 1882
88. *Ibid* 2 July 1881. Speech by William Brown to Otago Educational Institute.
89. *Ibid* 14 Apr 1880
90. OEB LB 21 1879/80 Pryde/Min of Edn 29 Jan 1880 p.469
91. ODT 17 Feb 1880
92. *Ibid* 6 June 1882
93. *Ibid* 7 June 1882
94. OEB LB 25 1882/3 Pryde/ Sec O.E.I. 20 July 1882 p.40
95. This followed the practice in England of giving an overall class assessment rather than examining each individual child.
96. ODT 16 Feb 1883
97. *Ibid*
98. OEB LB 1882/3 Pryde/Sec. Westland Edn Board 20 Mar 1883 p.883
99. R.M.Burdon, *New Zealand Notables 2* 1945 Christchurch Caxton Press pp. 67-103
100. ODT 19 Jan 1884

## ***Chapter 5***

### ***The Board on the Defence 1885-89***

The period 1885-1889 was one of the most difficult eras in New Zealand's trading history. The boom years of the 1870s were quickly forgotten as the country struggled to repay overseas loans from an income that was severely depressed by dwindling supplies of easily-mined gold and a lessened world demand for agricultural products. Successive governments believed that the only realistic course of action possible was to make further retrenchments in public spending and wait patiently for the day when the prices for export produce would rise once more. Meanwhile, the blight of economic depression lay upon the land. In 1884, the Stout-Vogel Ministry came into office by offering the hope that Vogel, a politician whose reputation as a financial conjuror had been earned in the previous decade, would lead the Colony to more prosperous times. But Vogel soon proved that he now had nothing of substantial worth to offer and his policies were rejected by the voters at the general election in 1887. In his stead, the last Atkinson Ministry came to power with a pledge to carry out further retrenchment in public spending in order to save the country from bankruptcy. Thereafter, until 1890, government policy was dictated by a parsimonious conservatism which affected education as it did other social services, making the task of providing adequate school services a particularly difficult one for education boards and teachers to perform.

More urgently than before, demands were made by politicians throughout the country that convincing evidence be produced to justify the tide of educational expenditure which continued to rise despite manifold government retrenchments and the depressed state of the economy. In 1885 the Education Vote, which was the second largest single item of government expenditure, stood at £357,806.<sup>1</sup> Robert Stout, then Minister of Education, exercised all the economies that he thought practicable but two years later the Vote had risen to £371,603.<sup>2</sup> Stout claimed that any further substantial reductions in government spending on the schools would imperil the ideal of state-provided universal education. For this reason, he was prepared to fight the 1887 election against the assertions of his opponents who claimed that in the national interest the Education Vote should be substantially reduced.

The public, however, was not convinced that Stout's belief was well-founded. After the election he was replaced as Minister of Education by George Fisher, an ambitious politician who joined the Atkinson Ministry with the support of the conservative Political Reform Association. This Association had assured the public that at least £100,000 could be removed from the Education Vote without causing fundamental harm to the schools.

Unlike Stout, Fisher was a politician who had never displayed much interest in educational matters except for their cost. Nevertheless, during his term of office, and that of his more distinguished predecessor, educational authorities were forced to examine more critically what it was that they were providing in return for public expenditure and what, in a time of financial crisis, might most easily be done without. The Otago Education Board was one authority that found it necessary to engage in searching criticisms of a kind quite unknown to it prior to 1884. The Board soon found that in order to convince the public and sceptical politicians that this service or that expenditure should be shielded from the financial axe, it was not enough for the Board to leave matters of educational moment to the comment of its paid officials. Increasingly, it became necessary for Board members themselves to discuss with school committees, teachers, and other interested groups, ways in which the best educational services could be supplied in return for the limited money available.

Moreover, speculation concerning the most desired forms of education inevitably raised questions that ranged more widely than the matter of financial cost alone. Thus it came about that during the years 1885 to 1889, the Board found itself more seriously engaged than hitherto in evaluating the worth of the learning and teaching taking place in the schools under its supervision. In this respect, the Board was assisted by the general policies pursued by Stout who, during his period of office as Premier and Minister of Education from 1885 to 1887, encouraged the boards, the teachers, and Department officers to consider education reforms for their own merit as well as with the objective of saving costs. Apart from the fact that he was a local Otago man who had served as the Board's legal adviser for many years, Stout impressed the Board with his positive attitude towards educational change even when the Board was not in agreement with the Minister's specific conclusions. The fact that Stout was prepared to criticize such things as methods of teaching, teacher training, the role of inspectors, and the national syllabus prescriptions, was an open invitation for the

Board to regard these matters as being well within its own province to criticize and to contribute an opinion. Unlike Fisher, Stout did something to dispel the view which had grown up in earlier years; that in matters that had more to do with the quality of education than they had to do with the costs of the schools, the government and the Department saw little need for substantial reform.

In 1886, the Board also had the good fortune to obtain the membership of Dr Hislop who had retired from the Department in that year. Hislop was not only familiar with and highly respected by the local district but he was also completely at home with politics at the national level. Although cautious by nature, Hislop revealed himself to be surprisingly sympathetic with the general tenor of educational change that Stout advocated. More importantly, as the former Head of the Education Department, he was quick to discern the distinction between worthwhile and fallacious proposals for economies in educational expenditure. In this respect, the criticism which Hislop made of the government's severe retrenchment proposals in December 1887, was to prove invaluable, not only for the Board but also for the country's schools as a whole. Hislop, however, was too closely identified with past educational endeavour to be able to win a reputation on the Board as an ardent advocate of educational reform. There were other new members on the Board during these years who were better suited to the reformist role, members who offered themselves for election because they were primarily concerned with the need for educational improvement. Notable among these were Dr William Brown, J.F.M. Fraser and Dr J. McGregor.

Brown, a medical practitioner, was elected to the Board in 1885 and served as Chairman in the years 1887 and 1888. After graduating from the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh, he had practised medicine in China for some years before coming to Dunedin in 1874.<sup>3</sup> He was particularly concerned with the adverse effects upon children's health which he believed resulted from 'syllabus grinding' in the schools. Once on the Board, Brown lost no time in criticizing the conditions under which the average child received education. His campaign against 'cramming' practices soon provoked the *Otago Daily Times* to declare that 'We may be quite sure that the seeds of many fatal illnesses are sown in the modern classrooms'.<sup>4</sup> This was a suspicion that was heightened after Brown asked most of the medical practitioners in Dunedin in August 1885, to record their opinions about the working conditions of the city's schools.

Almost with one voice, the several doctors condemned the lighting and ventilation systems of the schools. Furthermore, they were highly critical of the common practice of crowding up to 100 children into one classroom. Medical opinion was unanimous that these were sufficient conditions to produce a host of physical diseases. Two respondents also alluded to 'moral evils' that were consequent upon overcrowding. Public opinion was appalled at the conclusions which Brown and his colleagues had reached. Reacting to what had occurred, the Board lost no time in promulgating new ventilation regulations for all existing schools. The Board also devised new building regulations which allowed for an increased space allowance per pupil in all schools to be built in the future. Moreover, since it was the very large schools in the city area which had been the major target of criticism, the Board decided that no more schools that were designed to hold up to 1000 pupils would be built.<sup>5</sup> What the medical authorities had said in effect was that the Board's decisions in previous years to make 'efficient' provisions for schooling had been purchased at the expense of risking the health of individual children. The new amendments to the building regulations were clearly an attempt to avoid similar charges being made in the future.

Nevertheless, it was quickly realised by the Board and by a number of public spokesmen, that there was a limit to what could be done in response to the doctors' criticisms. To have provided all scholars with what medical opinion regarded as ideal working conditions, would have cost the Board far more than the funds available. Furthermore, advocacy of increased capitation expenditure was not expedient at a time when political sentiment was running strongly in favour of retrenchment rather than increases in government spending. Thus, the wider question was raised as to whether it was worth trying to educate children for such a long period of their life if the best schools that the country could afford placed physical health at risk?

To Brown, and to most other medical men, this question seemed to be particularly pertinent to the practice of enrolling infant children between the ages of five and seven in the schools. It was commonly agreed that it was the children of this age range who as a general rule suffered most from overcrowding, parsimonious staffing allocations, and inferior teaching. The Board's inspectors had no hesitation in condemning 'unintelligent practices in infant teaching' but they blamed the fault on the fact that teachers were not required to present preparatory classes for formal examination. On the other hand Brown

and his supporters concluded that the immediate problem was that the schools could not afford to supply the special equipment and the properly-trained teachers needed if infant work were to be pursued successfully. Their suggested solution was that rather than have the health of infants placed at risk by unsuitable physical conditions and by inappropriate mental demands being made upon them, it would be preferable if children were not allowed to attend school before the age of six, or perhaps even seven years. Five of the medical spokesmen who reported on the Dunedin schools stated that for health reasons they were firmly opposed to children attending school before the age of six, a conclusion that was endorsed by some commentators of more romantic persuasion who believed that 'there is not enough play and pleasantness in the lives of our infants'.<sup>6</sup> Brown gave evidence before a parliamentary Committee on Education in 1887 in which he stated that in his view children under seven years of age derived little benefit from schooling and were potentially subject to a great deal of physiological harm by being forced prematurely into the schools.<sup>7</sup>

As it was with proposals to improve school facilities, the practical difficulty which this suggestion presented to the Board was the problem of finance. The Board relied heavily upon the capitation payments it received from the government for infant scholars in order to finance its entire operations. Therefore, unless the government was prepared to change the basis of its financial allocation via the capitation grant system, the Board did not see how it could afford, to shut infant scholars out from the schools. Brown did, in fact, propose as a compromise that all children in the province who were under seven years of age should be exempted from school attendance in the afternoons, but his suggestion was swiftly rejected. The Board believed that allowing shorter hours of school for infants would be an act of financial folly as well as being an act that would place the Board outside the law. In May 1885, the Secretary had informed one school which the Board had discovered to be sending its junior classes home early in the afternoons, that '... by the terms of the Act the children must receive at least four hours instruction a day, two of which must be in the afternoon'.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, until the government saw fit to change its policy, the Board concluded that there was little more of real worth that it could do to meet the objections which had been raised to infant schooling practices.

This, Brown and others were forced to accept. Although the public conscience had been stirred on the matter, infant teaching in Otago continued to be compromised by overcrowded classes, inadequate



staffing, and the imposition of unrealistic learning tasks. A report in 1889 that one teacher in the Palmerston District High School was required to teach 104 infants<sup>9</sup> spoke for itself. On the other hand, frequent complaints by parents in country districts who objected to infant pupils being taught by monitors, was evidence of the fact that the smaller schools offered little by way of improvement in their infant teaching. The Board's inspectors approved of the practice of using older children as monitors to take infant work in the small schools,<sup>10</sup> but as late as 1889 protesting parents were still having to be informed that 'teachers are at liberty to employ monitors',<sup>11</sup> and that '... monitors are used in a very large number of smaller schools'.<sup>12</sup> Brown could well have been forgiven a feeling of disappointment that his work on the Board in this respect had produced so little by way of immediate results.

Nevertheless, one direct outcome of the criticism which had been aired on the Board about infant teachers, was a growth of interest in kindergarten schooling. In September 1888, Brown chaired a meeting of 50 people in Dunedin who were addressed by Sir William Fox on the 'kindergarten System'.<sup>13</sup> At the conclusion of the meeting a committee was set up to examine the possibility of establishing a kindergarten school in the city. Interest in such a project was heightened after the Bishop of Nelson and the Rev. Rutherford Waddell spoke to a Dunedin audience on the topic several months later. From these activities the Dunedin Kindergarten Association was formed, and the work of the Association, which built its own school, was later to have a significant effect upon improvements which took place in the infant rooms of the ordinary schools. Thus, those Board members who had prosecuted the cause of infant schooling could derive some comfort from the fact that although the immediate results of their work were disappointing, their efforts were not entirely in vain.

More importantly, criticism in 1885 of the working conditions in junior classrooms brought into focus once more, the general question of overwork and 'driving' in the schools. As increasing numbers of medical spokesmen voiced their concern about the effects of schooling upon children's health, so various commentators again pointed to the examination system as the chief cause of methods of 'cram' that 'could have disastrous consequences on the health and personalities of the pupils'.<sup>14</sup> In that year, Stout, in his capacity as Minister of Education, amended the syllabus in order to counter increasing complaints from school committees, education boards, inspectors and teachers, that too much detailed subject matter was being required to be learned in the

several standards. The major alteration consisted of dividing the syllabus prescriptions into 'pass' and 'class' subjects, a change which the Board had endorsed in 1883. In this way, it was hoped, the syllabus would now provide more realistic working tasks for all teachers, and for teachers in small schools in particular. But inspectors still found that in the schools 'examining or testing methods continued to predominate over educative methods'.<sup>15</sup> Within a year it was apparent that the syllabus reforms had had no appreciable effect upon the percentage grinding syndrome of which the doctors and others complained.

Unlike the NZEI and the inspectors, the education boards had not been consulted by Stout before the new syllabus regulations were promulgated in June 1885. In previous years the Board might have found this acceptable, the syllabus being a 'professional' matter and therefore only marginally relevant to the Board's responsibility as an administrative authority. In 1886, however, several members of the Board became so convinced that the national syllabus was the major obstacle in the way of any school reform, that they established a Board sub-committee to investigate and report upon ways in which the education of children might be arranged to avoid it being sacrificed to the interests of an examination system.

The committee, which even before it began its work was of the opinion that 'we demand too much task work and repress the individuality of teachers and pupils',<sup>16</sup> consisted of Dr Brown, J.F.M. Fraser, and the Rev. Dr James McGregor. Fraser, a prominent young lawyer, had the distinction when taking his seat in 1885 of being the youngest member ever to have been elected to the Board. Like McKenzie, he had promised school committees that he would not be dictated to by a 'ring' of Board officials, and his contempt of Board members 'whose ideas date from the year 1 B.C.'<sup>17</sup> was undisguised. Fraser had been born in Guernsey but he made much of the fact that he had received his education at Scotch College Melbourne and the Dunedin High School. He was keen to show the public that Board members like himself did possess educational ideas and could influence schooling policy. Accordingly, he welcomed the opportunity to tackle a question like the matter of syllabus reform. On the other hand, McGregor, the chairman of the committee, believed wholeheartedly in the value of syllabus reform irrespective of any political laurels that might come by way of its pursuit. Described by a recent critic as a 'doughty controversialist',<sup>18</sup> McGregor was in the evening years of his life when he was elected to the Board in 1884. He had a distinguished

academic record, having been Professor of Divinity at New College Edinburgh. During his time on the Board he was the minister at Columba Presbyterian Church in Oamaru and as his work on the syllabus reform issue was to show, McGregor made up for in enthusiasm and Polemic, what he lacked in political guile.

Under McGregor's name, the Board's committee circularised school committees and prominent teachers and educational administrators both within and beyond Otago,<sup>19</sup> asking for their opinions on the present syllabus prescriptions and also their views as to 'the regulative principle upon which the syllabus ought to be constructed'.<sup>20</sup> Newspaper evidence suggests that while some of those who replied to the committee's circular took a conservative standpoint,<sup>21</sup> others were more than happy to endorse the radical tone of the circular which McGregor had devised. The Rector of the Port Chalmers High School was one respondent who agreed that education should not be equated with the number of subjects studied and who supported his thesis by quoting Spencer's dictum that 'Success in life is far more a matter of energy than information'.<sup>22</sup> On the basis of the replies which he received, McGregor compiled a strongly-written report advocating immediate and sweeping syllabus reforms. Brown and Fraser, the other two members of the committee, were somewhat taken aback to find that not only had McGregor made a selective use of the replies which he had received to his circular but that he had also thrown aside all usual protocol and had written his report in the first person. Nevertheless, the circular had attracted considerable public attention in the province, and in February 1887, the Board decided to forward the report to the Department, asking also that it be presented to parliament. In a procedural sense, this was far beyond any action which the Board had previously taken on 'professional' matters.

The major aim of McGregor's argument was to attack the conventional assumption [an assumption built into the 1877 Act] that a good education could be measured by the number of subjects of which the syllabus was composed. McGregor argued on the contrary that in the interest of providing 'a proper education for each and every child', the number of prescribed subjects in the existing syllabus should be reduced to the barest minimum, and the practice of specifying a detailed series of attainment tasks should be abolished. Instead, he suggested that the Department should be content to provide broad guidelines for teachers to follow. In support of his contention, McGregor wrote: 'The principle of the syllabus ought to be determined with controlling reference to the conditions and capacity of the children at school, and

their preparation for the life that is before them; from this point of view testimonies [i.e. evidence from replies to his circular] reveal striking condemnation of the existing syllabus with its prescribed task work that is fitted to repress the individuality of the teacher and overstrain the minds of the pupils with toil that is fitted to retard rather than forward healthful growth of mind and is detrimental to vigorous growth of the body.<sup>23</sup> In short, from the generalised anxiety about the health of children in the schools, McGregor fashioned a case against the existing syllabus which he later described as being 'like a great fat woman sitting on the child'.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, he proposed that well trained and intelligent teachers should be able to exercise far more individuality in their management of schools, thus doing away with the machinery and the unfortunate practices that were associated with the 'percentage pass'. In McGregor's view, it was the teachers not the Department or the inspectors, who were the best judges of the most suitable work to provide for individual pupils.

The report was finally, and somewhat incongruously, published as printed evidence before a parliamentary Committee on Education which had not even been established at the time when McGregor had compiled his written argument.<sup>25</sup> But the general reaction in Wellington was that McGregor's recommendations were not only impracticable but also, given the general level of the quality of teachers throughout the country, irresponsible. Interested in reform as he undoubtedly was, Stout had no confidence whatsoever that the majority of teachers were sufficiently qualified by 1887 to exercise the discretion which McGregor intended that they should.<sup>26</sup> Habens was another who thought that proposals to abandon prescribed examinations bordered upon the fantastic. Rather sourly, he commented that the Department's syllabus at least had the merit that it worked.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Hislop, who had joined the Board after the report was written, probably destroyed any remaining political credibility in McGregor's argument when he voiced his doubt that the report was constructed upon a fair appraisal of the evidence.<sup>28</sup> The fact was that the growing concern about examination practices in the schools was more than matched by the conviction that 'the feeling of insecurity of tenure which many teachers have is one of the safeguards of the service'.<sup>29</sup> McGregor's thesis attempted to resolve the dilemma by claiming that it no longer existed, but this conclusion had little plausibility for 'practical' men.

Yet McGregor's work, and the publicity which it received, was not without profit because even for the cautious critic, it suggested a

direction to educational reform that was not fundamentally in dispute. One effect on the local scene of the reformist spirit which the Board had encouraged, was instanced by the *Otago Daily Times* in January 1888. On this occasion, the editor seriously questioned the value of school examination results as a measure of educational worth. The syllabus, the editor argued, ensured that little of genuine educational merit could result from schooling as it existed. This was because in the first place Habens' syllabus was based on the fallacious assumption that all worthwhile school tasks had to be those that submitted readily to external examination. The editor further agreed that the Inspector-General had committed the grievous errors of allowing inspectors no discretion in judgment and of expecting pupils and teachers to get through in ten months, work that could more reasonably be demanded over a period of thirteen months. Finally, it was claimed that under existing conditions, teachers could never use their individuality to good purpose because the author of the syllabus demanded that the work be 'accurately' appraised in 'degrees, minutes, and seconds'.<sup>30</sup>

Instead, the editor believed that the syllabus should be designed first to encourage good teaching and should be concerned only secondarily with discovering methods for testing the work completed. Minimum, rather than maximum, quantities of work should be prescribed and the inspectors should be asked to report specifically 'on what use the teacher makes of the responsibility and initiative hereby granted to him by the syllabus'.<sup>31</sup> As a statement of educational principle, this particular editorial was far in advance of anything which the *Times* had previously written. In essence, it provided a modified version of McGregor's argument, but even so, the editorial suggested the allocation of far more responsibility to the teachers than the Board, itself, let alone the Department, was in fact at that time ready to grant.

It was one of the paradoxes of the day that neither the majority of Board members nor the Board's officials were prepared to adopt an attitude towards the teachers that was consistent with the liberal spirit which the Board had endorsed in McGregor's report. The Board's inspectors continued to be anything but optimistic about the capabilities of the average teacher to accept more professional responsibility, and their caution was reinforced by the Board's own anxiety that resulted from its limited control over teacher appointments and promotions.

Apart from criticisms from medical authorities, complaints continued to be voiced about such practices as the provision of excessive home lessons and keeping children in after school to prepare for the

inspector's examination. The Board, as in earlier years, took no direct action in response to the criticisms aired. It argued that extra hours of schooling, for example, was a matter 'which rests entirely with the school committees'.<sup>32</sup> On the question of home lessons it had nothing to say at all. Indeed, the pupils had more to offer by way of protest about excessive homework than did the Board. In 1889, much to the amazement of the Dunedin public, a group of senior pupils at the George Street School conducted a half-day strike in order to publicise their dissatisfaction with the amount of homework they were required to complete.<sup>33</sup> The community was more than a little disturbed at the spectacle of pupils taking action into their own hands, but even those of the most conservative persuasion did not deny that the strikers might have had a point.

The Board, however, appeared to be reluctant to take any action to promulgate regulations which might later be used by a teacher to explain away poor examination results. On the other hand, the inspectors regarded homework and 'keeping in' abuses as further convincing evidence that the teachers as a whole were not yet capable of being granted more professional autonomy in their work. In their annual reports, the inspectors constantly advocated more enlightened educational practices in the classrooms and referred to overseas authorities such as Arnold and Fitch to support their contentions. But the more they inspected classes of children who had been painfully and stupidly prepared for examination, the more suspicious the inspectors became of the liberal demand that the teachers be given more freedom in their work. They took the contrary view that the majority of the teachers in Otago still needed to 'work in blinkers'. Indeed, they regarded any widening of the discretion granted to an individual teacher as being a trial that was 'fraught with danger'.<sup>34</sup>

To those radical members of the Board who denied that education was compatible with the examination system, the inspectors' distrust was a sufficient explanation for many of the immediate ills that beset the schools. Yet the fact was that in practice the Board, itself, did little to dissuade the teachers from concentrating wholeheartedly upon the production of good examination results. Not only did the Board continue to devote attention to comparing the results in its schools with those in other districts but it also stepped up its policy of dismissing teachers whose classes performed poorly in the annual examinations. In the Board's view, greater use of its powers of dismissal was justifiable given that its power of decision in appointments had become minimal.

The success of the school committees in using their electoral strength to destroy attempts by Pryde and others to centralise appointments procedures, meant that the Board now had little chance to exercise direct control over the quality of appointees. In 1885, the Secretary informed the South Canterbury Education Board that the Otago Board sent to the committees 'only the applications of the candidates whom it is prepared to appoint',<sup>35</sup> and that 'there is no chance of a hitch occurring in the appointment because the whole Board considers the applications before sending them to the Committee'.<sup>36</sup> Pryde also stated that the method worked well. What he did not say was that the only reason for the absence of friction was that the Board seldom tried to block the names of any certificated applicants from being sent forward for possible appointment. Typical of the Board's abrogation of its role in the selection of teachers, was the content of a letter sent to the Mt. Cargill School Committee in March 1887. The Secretary wrote as follows: 'The following are the eligible applicants for the position at your school. Bothing F.J. classified D 4 Bremner P. classified E 3 (Six other names plus their classifications) I enclose certificates or testimonials in favour of each candidate except Warburton who has not forwarded either to this office. Kindly inform me whom the committee recommends for appointment.'<sup>37</sup> In such circumstances, the Board found itself being increasingly forced to rely upon dismissal actions as a means of satisfying itself that the quality of the teaching in the schools was maintained at a desirable level.

The immediate price that was paid for this was that the weight of evaluation continued to be placed on the percentage pass in spite of the growing scepticism about the value of external examinations as measures of educational worth. Moreover, many committees and teachers were far from happy with the Board's perfunctory use of its powers of dismissal, a fact which sometimes did little to add to the prestige of the Board as a public body. In terms of the Education Act, the Board was required to consult with the committees before it dismissed teachers employed in the schools. But in contrast to procedures relating to appointments, the Board believed that it had satisfied the requirement 'to consult' when it wrote to a committee informing it that a given teacher was to be dismissed. In August 1887, the Secretary stated the Board's ruling unequivocally when the Naseby School Committee protested at what it considered to be an arbitrary decision by the Board to dismiss the school's teacher. Pryde wrote: 'You are in error in stating that Mr Warsip was removed without your committee being consulted. The committee was informed of the action

that the Board was going to take and I think you will on reflection, see that Section 45 of the Act has been strictly complied with. The Board's decision on 20 May was 'consulting' the committee and although the Act makes it compulsory for the Board to consult a Committee before appointing, suspending, or dismissing a teacher, consulting does not necessarily mean consenting, and cannot by any means be construed as such.' <sup>38</sup> Against often vociferous opposition, the Board was prepared to maintain this tight interpretation of 'consulting' in relation to dismissals until the 'Kaikorai' Case occurred in 1888.

As early as 1882, the inspectors had expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the headmaster of the large Kaikorai School. In 1884, the headmaster, who was strongly supported by the school committee, claimed that he was a victim of persecution by the inspectorate, but a subsequent Board inquiry completely exonerated the inspectors of the charge of bias. It was agreed, however, that the headmaster would be allowed to retain his position on the expectation that the quality of work in the school would improve. When the examination results in 1885 proved to be worse rather than better, the Board believed that the time had come to dismiss the headmaster on account of incompetence. But the majority of the committee pleaded that he be given yet a further period of trial and somewhat reluctantly, the Board yielded its position. Finally, however, in September 1887, when no sign of an improvement in the school's examination results had eventuated, the Board served the headmaster with a notice of dismissal. At the same time, Pryde also wrote to the Kaikorai School Committee: 'The Board is reluctantly compelled to dispense with Mr McLauchlan's services as headmaster of the Kaikorai School and I have therefore to give you notice that it is the intention of the Board, to dispense with his services at the end of the current year.'<sup>39</sup> As far as the Board was concerned, its actions had more than met with the requirement 'to consult' that was imposed by the Education Act.

But this was not the view of the Committee which took umbrage at McLauchlan's dismissal because it believed that the Board's refusal to consult further was both arbitrary and illegal. The Board claimed that in the interests of education it was entitled to override local sentiment and dismiss a weak teacher; the Kaikorai Committee denied that the Board had such a right. Theirs was the old cry that the local community, and the local community alone, knows best the worth of its teachers. It was an argument, moreover, which attracted a great amount of public sympathy, and after holding a well attended public meeting at which the



Board was depicted as a modern form of the Star Chamber, the Committee decided to petition parliament against the Board's decision. As a result of the Committee's petition,<sup>40</sup> the government decided to establish a Royal Commission of Inquiry under the aegis of the Resident Magistrate of Dunedin, Mr Carew.

Before Carew could undertake his investigation, however, the Kaikorai Committee decided to sue the Board for wrongful dismissal in the Supreme Court. When the case was heard before Mr Justice Williams in January 1888, the question at issue was not the merit of the headmaster's work but whether the Board had fulfilled its obligation to consult with the committee before serving notice of dismissal on McLauchlan. The Board claimed that the arrangements which it had made with the school committee in earlier years to give the headmaster further opportunities to prove his worth, fulfilled the requirement 'to consult'. But Justice Williams ruled that arrangements with an earlier committee could not be held to be binding upon its successors. Williams further concluded that the Board's perfunctory interpretation of the word 'consult' would not do. In his judgment, he wrote: 'If the legislature makes consultation a condition precedent to action, it must intend that the party whose duty it is to seek advice should lay before its advisers all the materials which would enable that advice to be given ... If a duty is placed upon the Board to ask the advice of the Committee, it is plainly part of that duty to furnish them with all the materials in its possession which are not in the possession of the committee, so as to enable the advice to be given.'<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the Court ruled that McLauchlan had not been properly dismissed and that he was therefore entitled to retain his office and emoluments until he was legally deprived of them.

The Kaikorai Judgment did nothing to heighten the Board's popularity in the community. After complying with all the legal niceties, the Board finally dismissed McLauchlan on 17 May 1883<sup>42</sup> amidst a chorus of complaint from school committees around Dunedin. In response to the Board's decision to serve final notice of dismissal on the headmaster, the Kaikorai School Committee Resolved: 'That forced to submit to the arbitrary decision of the Education Board dismissing the headmaster who has been twenty-four years in the district and during which time he had retained the esteem and the confidence of the householders, the committee records its protest against that decision ...'<sup>43</sup> Initially too, the press also joined in the vilification of the Board as an authority whose autocratic tendencies threatened the worth

of committeemen and teachers. Later, press comment was to reverse its stand on the appointments and dismissals controversy, but the adverse publicity which the Board received over the Kaikorai Case was no help to members who knew that a fresh compromise with the committees would now soon have to be attempted.

The Board's legal defeat and its consequent loss of standing, was doubly unfortunate for the Board because in other important ways it had amply demonstrated by 1889 that its existence as an educational authority was far from being an impediment to the committees and teachers in Otago. Indeed, Board members could justly claim that in many respects the results of their energies had been directly to the advantage of schools and people in the province. The Board's decision to attempt to resolve the long standing controversy among parents, committeemen, and teachers over the matter of textbooks, was a case in point. Since the provincial days in Otago, many parents in the district had continued to complain bitterly about the frequent changes in textbooks which took place within schools and about the absence of common texts among the schools. The parents' case was invariably made on the grounds of needless cost, and it is difficult to avoid gaining the impression that many critics regarded a uniform set of school books as an educational reform to be desired above all else. Over the years, however, the Board had taken no action on the matter because the teachers had continued to argue strongly that they needed to change texts to keep up with professional developments and that the choice of books was something that rightfully belonged to the professional judgment of teachers as a group. Furthermore, many critics apart from teachers, believed that there was something ideologically objectionable about proposals to have uniform texts because 'we do not want every girl and boy to be trained after one pattern'.<sup>44</sup> In the view of such persons, the national syllabus prescriptions provided more than enough by way of uniformity without adding the requirement of common texts. Under the Education Act, the Department was required to authorise all books used in the schools,<sup>45</sup> but for many years the central authority made no attempt to enforce uniform texts on all schools. For its part, the Board acquiesced in this arrangement until it became clear that if boards did not impose some restriction on the range of texts themselves, political pressure from parents might force the Department to prescribe common texts for public schools in all districts.

In 1885, Stout, as Minister of Education, circularised the boards asking for a list of the texts used in their schools and intimating that he

intended to revise the authorised list of textbooks gazetted by the Department. As a result of his inquiries, Stout found that many schools were using titles that had not been authorised by the Department and it seemed to the Minister that from the national point of view, there was an unnecessary degree of diversity in the range of texts being used. Stout suggested that the time had arrived when a series of texts specifically designed for New Zealand schools should be produced.<sup>46</sup> The NZEI opposed the suggestion, and apart from passing on Stout's circular to the Otago branches of the Educational Institute and to the school committees, the Board did not feel particularly inclined to take any deliberate action on its own behalf.

In 1887, however, the Auckland Board took steps to restrict the numbers of texts in use in the schools under its jurisdiction.<sup>47</sup> In August of that year, the Dunedin and Suburban School Committees Conference, along with a number of other individual school committees, demanded that the Otago Board do likewise. The Conference, in fact, resolved to transmit to the Minister of Education its belief that: 'Uniformity in the books to be used in the several standards of the public schools should be aimed at by regulation of the Minister of Education, and that changes should be made as seldom as possible. Further, that the many changes that have been made from time to time have been matters of grievous complaint'.<sup>48</sup> Stung by this criticism of its past *laissez-faire* policies with regard to text-books, and by the decision of the Conference to submit its complaint directly to the Education Department, the Board circularised all its head teachers in the following month, informing them that the range of books used among the different schools would have to be reduced and changes in texts implemented more slowly.<sup>49</sup> The Conference kept up the pressure by requiring all candidates for Board election in 1888 to declare whether they were in favour of restricting the number of texts being used in the schools.<sup>50</sup> The culminating point came when the Department asked the Board in June 1888, whether it deemed it 'desirable to exercise its [the Board's] authority for the purpose of restricting the freedom of teachers with respect to the choice of books'.<sup>51</sup>

The Board thereupon faced the Otago Educational Institute with the question at the Institute's annual conference in July 1888. As a result, the teachers joined with the Board in devising new textbook regulations which were to come into effect the following year and which provided for a drastic restriction upon the range of books that could be used by any one school in the Otago district.<sup>52</sup> As a concession to the argument

of the teachers that changes were sometimes necessary in order to accommodate to professional developments, the regulations allowed for a complete review of titles at the end of three years. Apart from this, however, the regulations stipulated that the introduction of new titles would be allowed only in very exceptional circumstances.

The Board was gratified to find that in contrast to the public's reception of its policies on teacher appointments and dismissals, there was an enthusiastic response to the textbook regulations. Pryde informed the Department that the Board had 'dealt very thoroughly with the question of School-Books',<sup>53</sup> and the Board, feeling confident that it had the community's support, made it clear to individual teachers that the regulations would be firmly enforced.<sup>54</sup> The textbooks regulations constituted one type of increase in the Board's centralised authority to which most committees did not object, while the teachers, as a group, clearly regarded the new regulations as being preferable to the prospect of having colonial texts prescribed, like the syllabus, by the Department. What the Board had clearly done was to use its authority to resolve differences between parents, committees and teachers to the general satisfaction of all. Thus, what it achieved in this particular issue was in sharp contrast to its failure to gain any significant unanimity on the matter of appointments, and on questions relating to the general, evaluation of the quality of work undertaken in the classrooms. The plain fact was that in the latter case, unlike problems relating to textbooks, there was as yet no overwhelming consensus as to how the ills which Brown and McGregor had highlighted, might immediately be repaired.

The Board was also able to use the general sentiment of the community to defend the ideal of 'education for all' successfully against exclusivist tendencies which from time to time emerged in the thinking of some teachers and committees. As with the issue of textbooks, when the feeling of the wider community was reasonably clear, the Board felt confident in ruling firmly on the matter in hand. When, for example, the Chairman of the Otago Benevolent Institution complained to the Board in 1889 that children from the Institution had been turned away from local schools because they were not able to afford to wear shoes, the Board was clearly horrified. The Secretary replied, 'I can hardly credit that children have been refused admission to the Public Schools on account of presenting themselves barefoot, but if such cases have occurred the Headteachers have acted wholly on their own responsibility.'<sup>55</sup>

A more difficult situation occurred several years earlier when a number of school committees in Dunedin asked the Board to establish a special truant school so that those children who came from undesirable homes and who possessed anti-social habits could be segregated from their fellows.<sup>56</sup> In 1886, the Auckland Education Board had established a truant school<sup>57</sup> and in provincial days Otago had had a waifs' school for 'free' scholars. Now, many prominent citizens, including enlightened men like Cohen, feared that without such a school in Dunedin, a tightened policing of the compulsory clauses would 'in all probability introduce a leaven from the semi-criminal class which would prove most injurious to the health and morals of those children now in regular attendance'.<sup>58</sup> The Board, however, took the view that the belief that 'education destroys class distinction'<sup>59</sup> was of greater worth than immediate fears of 'the great unwashed'. In spite of considerable political pressure from the committees, and in spite of the precedent set by its Auckland counterpart, the Board refused to entertain the idea of building a special truant school. Furthermore, it had the satisfaction in the end of seeing many parents reject the arguments which the committees had put forward. The householders in the district of the Union Street School for example, overwhelmingly dissented from the recommendations of the school committee after they had listened to the Rev. J. North argue that the introduction of a vagabond school would be an everlasting disgrace in a democratic community.<sup>60</sup>

During these years, the Board was also seen to good advantage as the community's spokesman in defence of the public school system from attacks by unfriendly critics representing denominational interests. The Roman Catholic Bishop Moran had long alleged that the secular schools were the vehicles of inevitable moral decline in the community but his exaggerated charges over the years had not helped his case. In July 1887, however, [shortly before the general election] the Anglican Bishop Nevill, also charged that the public schools were morally corrupting institutions. Specifically, he accused the secular system of producing children who were cruel, selfish and lacking in tone and refinement. He stated further that he knew of cases of girls making up to teachers and of boys sexually assaulting girls while attending the schools. 'Many girls' minds,' he declared, 'are full of disgusting thoughts and they possess a poisoning want of modesty'.<sup>61</sup>

Dr Brown, then Chairman of the Board, wasted no time in holding an emergency meeting of the Board, the inspectors, and senior teachers, in order that the weight of Nevill's remarks might be appraised. So

seriously was the matter taken, in fact, that teachers were brought in from as far away as Lawrence to assist the Board in its deliberations.<sup>62</sup> All who commented were agreed that they knew of no evidence that would substantiate the Bishop's specific assertions of sexual delinquency. Furthermore, none believed that a general moral laxity was rife in Otago's schools. While Pryde made much of the fact that the Board exercised great care in overseeing the moral character of its teachers, the senior teachers for their part, claimed that the pupils' behaviour was generally of a high standard. The worst that several spokesmen would admit to was that sometimes boys had been known to write indecently on lavatory walls, but with one accord they all declared that in their experience, girls were never immodest or immoral in their behaviour at school.<sup>63</sup>

When upon further challenge it became evident that Nevill could not convincingly substantiate his complaints, the Board saw no need for further action, although the Dunedin Committees Conference later saw fit to pass a vote of censure on the Bishop for his unwarranted remarks.<sup>64</sup> Again, what the Board had accomplished in this instance was to demonstrate that as a public education authority, it was prepared and able to defend the generous sentiments which underlay 'public schooling' from attacks from without. As Bishop Nevill found to his cost, the Board was prepared to do this every bit as firmly as it was prepared to rule against the exclusivist tendencies which were sometimes evident in the actions of committees and teachers. There could be no doubt that the Board's prestige was at its highest when it was called upon to defend the 'public schools' as a whole, and in this respect it was the Board's good fortune to find itself cast strongly in that role after the election of the Atkinson Ministry in October 1887. Until then the Board had maintained its traditional policy of getting and spending all the money it could from the government in spite of the worsening general economic situation. Nor could it be said that the Board was especially helpful to Stout in his attempts to economise in educational expenditure. In 1884 legislation was enacted to authorise Road Boards, County Councils, and Urban Authorities to contribute to the erection or maintenance of school buildings, and in October 1885, Stout asked the education boards to test the response of local authorities in their district. The Minister added by way of warning that: '... the time may come when each district will have to erect its own school buildings, and the money hitherto appropriated for the purpose may not be continued by the General Assembly, excepting only a limited amount and then to new districts.'<sup>65</sup> While the Board showed little enthusiasm

for the request, the Mayor of Dunedin was positively alarmed. He did not believe that the Corporation had any right to be getting into the business of building schools and he expressed himself to be fearful of the propensities of the government to increase the burden on local ratepayers.<sup>66</sup>

Frustrated in this approach, Stout then circularised the boards in May 1886, ordering them not to spend any of their special building grant monies on the repainting of existing schools. The Minister did not suggest that the schools should go without paint, but what he was trying to do was to get the boards to accommodate to the depressed state of the economy by carrying out retrenchment policies within their own districts. The Boards however, were again far from co-operative. In reply to a memorandum from the Westland Education Board, Pryde wrote: 'I beg to inform you that at a meeting of the Education Board held last Thursday [17 June] it was decided to take no notice of the circular from the Department'.<sup>67</sup> It was true that the Board took somewhat greater notice when it was informed in June the following year that the special capitation grant of five shillings was to be phased out at the rate of one shilling per year over the next five years, but even the receipt of this news did not disturb members unduly. The Chairman felt that as long as the teachers did not ask their school committees for too much extra equipment there would be no need for drastic retrenchments.<sup>68</sup> During Stout's period of office, the Board indeed gave the impression that it was still more concerned with seeing that the schools in its district got a good share of government money, than it was with making serious retrenchments on its own behalf.

Stout's successor, George Fisher, could not, however, be so lightly ignored. As the result of the general election in 1887, Fisher had received a convincing mandate to make substantial retrenchments in the Education Vote. Moreover, the Board members were well aware that during the previous several years Fisher had made no secret of the fact that he regarded education boards as being costly administrative authorities that could well be abolished. Once in office, Fisher lost no time in indicating the areas in the education system in which he intended to make the greatest savings. He also established a parliamentary Committee on Education to collect evidence as to ways in which other savings and reforms might be initiated.<sup>69</sup> The Board's inspectors, as well as its Chairman, Dr Brown, gave evidence to the committee, but the Board decided that sooner than wait for Fisher's

retrenchments to be promulgated, a show of serious intent to economise on its part might be successful in diverting the Minister from his course.

Accordingly, in October 1887 the Board set up its own retrenchment sub-committee under the chairmanship of J.F.M. Fraser which produced a scheme that would save an estimated £10,000 p.a. via reductions in salaries and school committee allowances.<sup>70</sup> In November, Fraser wrote to the Minister: 'We can reduce our expenditure by £310,000 and if we can do this in Otago, the Colony can surely reduce its expenditure by £100,000 ... I feel certain that you will appreciate our spontaneous efforts to assist you, and that our action will greatly strengthen your hand in dealing with other Education Boards.'<sup>71</sup> Fraser's remarks were hardly calculated to appeal to other education boards, but the object of his exercise was clearly to promise reduced expenditure if in return Fisher would give up his reformist zeal. Cynics would have been hard-pressed to find anything that was 'spontaneous' about the Board's sudden conversion to the view that there was a need for substantial retrenchment. Furthermore, as events transpired, the Board's ploy succeeded only in convincing the Minister that all boards could get by with considerably less money than they had received in the past.

The government's first specific retrenchment measures were announced on 29 November. The boards were informed that after the current quarter all capitation payments would be calculated on the basis of 'strict average attendance'<sup>72</sup> and that the special grant paid for training colleges would cease after December 1887. On 7 December they were further advised that the special capitation grant of four shillings would not be paid after that month,<sup>73</sup> and two days later an even worse blow fell when without any prior notification to the boards or to parliament, the government gazetted regulations which stopped payments on any child under six years of age and any child who had passed standard six.<sup>74</sup> These were by far the most savage retrenchments which had been introduced since 1877, and it now became incumbent upon the Board, along with its counterparts in other districts, to fight against those restrictions which it believed were impossibly severe. The Board was also charged with the unenviable, although perhaps salutary task of putting the reductions into effect in ways that would do the least harm to the public schools in the district as a whole.

It soon became clear in this respect, that the success of the Board's policies in 'defending' the system were to depend not only on the Board's traditionally strong political contacts in Wellington but also upon the strength of the conviction of Board members themselves about



the worth of what they were defending. The abolition of the training college grant was a good case in point. The Board professed itself to be amazed that the government had decided to cease all payments for the training of teachers,<sup>75</sup> but the overwhelming majority of parliamentarians agreed with Fisher that: 'The instruction given in the training colleges is purely of a literary character, and is not calculated to enable teachers to carry out the duties which afterwards devolve upon them'.<sup>76</sup>

The training colleges in the other centres had clearly not impressed the public with their worth, and even George Hogben, the man later to be hailed as the champion of teacher training in New Zealand, thought at that time that the benefits of training colleges were somewhat problematical.<sup>77</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude, however, that the atypical attitude of the Otago Board owed its strength to the fact that in the previous several years, the Board itself, had sought actively to make the Dunedin Training College more relevant to the needs of the schools in the province. Accordingly, the Board felt that the College, which had been reformed largely through the Board's own initiative, was too valuable to be allowed to become the victim of retrenchment.

In spite of the new teacher training regulations which the Board had promulgated in 1882, it had soon become apparent that with the limited facilities on hand, it was as difficult as ever to provide an integrated training programme which embraced the preparation of students for external certificate examinations along with allowing attendance at university classes and providing adequate opportunities for practice teaching. Shortage of space at the Normal School was a major limiting factor in the amount of practice teaching that could be completed. By 1885, the Rector, W. Fitzgerald, reported that with 76 students on the roll, the only effective way he had been able to arrange practice teaching was to divide the students into five groups and give each group one week's continuous teaching in the Normal School in every five.<sup>78</sup> Fitzgerald regarded this as a reasonable, if not ideal, solution because he believed that work towards literary qualifications and attendance at university classes was every bit as important a part of teacher training as was practice teaching.

Notwithstanding his conclusion however, complaints continued to be voiced about the poor practical preparation which the students received. In February 1886, the Board, on the motion of Fraser/McKenzie, called on its inspectors to make a general inspection of the Training College and the School of Art.<sup>79</sup> The inspectors had little to say about the School

of Art<sup>80</sup> but their report on practice teaching at the College was highly critical and advocated sweeping reforms. The inspectors were not impressed with Fitzgerald's attempt to group students to overcome the problem set by limited facilities for practical work. They concluded: 'We have now had a large experience of teachers trained under these arrangements and regret to say that on taking up appointments after leaving the Normal School a large proportion of them prove unable to teach or manage classes or small schools in a satisfactory manner, and have practically to learn their business at their pupils' expense and not without much pain and annoyance to themselves.'<sup>81</sup>

As far as the inspectors were concerned, the priorities in teacher training needed to be radically altered. This was also the view of the Board. Instead of the College attempting to fulfil a variety of aims loosely grouped under the heading of general education, the Inspectors emphasised more strongly than they had done in 1882 that attention should be given first to practical training, then to preparation for teachers' certificate examinations, and finally to allowance for university studies if there were any time left over. To those who spoke of the desirability of maintaining a programme directed towards more liberal studies, the inspectors' reply was swift and unequivocal. They wrote: 'The staff should consider it among the chief objects of the training school to make every student an efficient class teacher. If this is accomplished the difficulty of teaching and managing any average school will prove trifling.'<sup>82</sup>

In accord with their philosophy, the inspectors suggested that the existing shortage of facilities for classroom practice could best be overcome by creating six schools in the city as associated schools. This recommendation, which drew upon teacher training schemes in Victoria, was designed to provide a programme in which all students would spend one week in five teaching in the classrooms under the supervision of regular teachers and observed periodically by the Training College staff. Most of the remaining four weeks would be spent by the students attending the College to receive lectures in method and in the academic subjects required for the Department's certification examinations. As a result of their investigations, the inspectors were also convinced that more academic tutors were required if the College were to be able to do the job of examination preparation properly.

The Board agreed with all of the major recommendations of its officers and in April 1886 designed new regulations to put the changes into effect. At this point, however, the Board found the way blocked by

Stout's refusal as Minister of Education to give the new regulations his unqualified approval as was required by the Education Act. The Minister had major doubts as to whether teachers in 'associated schools' would have the ability to instruct students properly and whether parents would welcome the idea of students taking lessons in the 'associated schools'. But he was even more disturbed at the intention of the Board to lessen the link between the Training College and the University and to build up a separate academic staff at the College. Stout was convinced that 'we must use our universities for the training of our teachers because these will give teachers not technical instruction only but culture also'.<sup>83</sup> He also believed that the Board's decision to increase the number of academic tutors would lead to a wasteful duplication of resources and the establishment of a rival university college.<sup>84</sup> The Minister's doubts were echoed by Habens<sup>85</sup> and enthusiastically endorsed by Fitzgerald who did not like any part of the Board's proposed reforms.

The Board rejoined by quoting successful accounts from Victoria as a fitting precedent for establishing 'associated schools'. It also reiterated its view that the Board's first concern was 'to provide better technical training for young teachers'.<sup>86</sup> It further believed that less reliance upon university resources in teacher training was thoroughly justified because: 'Hitherto the trainees have for the purpose of studying Certificate C [i.e. a Department qualification] attended some of the classes at the Otago University but this plan has tended to operate prejudicially against their professional training as teachers and has most signally failed in getting trainees to take the C Certificate. Only one student has obtained a C Certificate although many have matriculated'.<sup>87</sup>

In the end, however, a compromise was reached whereby the Department agreed reluctantly to the establishment of 'associated schools' and the Board, amidst some grumbling about 'being expected to uphold the university',<sup>88</sup> abandoned its intention to increase the academic staff at the College. Fitzgerald continued to complain that the new regulations, especially those provisions relating to 'associated schools', were unworkable, but by October 1886, the Board, which had earlier felt it necessary to call the attention of the Rector of the Normal School to the necessary part of practical training of students in the art and methods of teaching,<sup>89</sup> had had enough. Pryde wrote to Fitzgerald: 'Unless you are confident of your ability to carry out the present scheme in its entirety and with a view to making it a success, you should state so at the outset and the Board will make other arrangements. The Board

is confident that if the Headmasters of Associated Schools are worked with harmoniously and with tact there will be a total absence of that friction which you seem to fear.'<sup>90</sup> Thereafter, the Rector bent his efforts to ensure that the new scheme of 'associated schools', which came into operation in April 1887, would work successfully.

The Board's dismay when it learned in November 1887 that Fisher had decided to abolish the training college grants could therefore be readily appreciated. Likewise, the Board's decision to keep the Training College open by funding the institution out of its ordinary income, could be understood. Educational opinion in Otago had long believed that somehow and in some way, teacher training was something to be desired. But when in defiance of opinion in the rest of the Colony, the Board declared in 1888 that the maintenance of a Training College was an 'absolute necessity ... for the efficient and successful training of young teachers',<sup>91</sup> it rested its case on something other than stock clichés. Although cynics could rightly point out that the Board was able to continue to finance the College only because it retrenched teachers' salaries, the truth was that after 1883 especially, the Board's attempts to make the Training College more relevant to the schools as a whole, had convinced members at first hand that teacher training was anything but a luxury that could be done without in times of economic scarcity. In this respect, it was also noteworthy that in 1888, the Board's appreciation of the potential value of teacher training was far ahead of the views of teachers as expressed through the NZEI.

The Board's reaction to the government's other major retrenchment decision to cease payments on five year old children and on children who had passed standard six, was more mixed. After the agitation by Brown and others in previous years against the harmful effects of infant schooling, the Board was not prepared to claim that the exclusion of five year olds from school would now be something that was educationally abhorrent. In their written evidence before the parliamentary Committee on Education in 1887, two of the Board's inspectors, Petrie and Taylor, advocated on educational grounds that the school age should be raised immediately to six.<sup>92</sup> Brown likewise, argued before the committee that for the good of their own physical well-being, infant children should be shut out from the schools. Brown was careful to point out, however, that he advocated exclusion not on the grounds of cost but for reasons of health.<sup>93</sup> And when it became apparent that the government was interested in excluding infants solely in order that it might reduce its capitation grants to the boards the attitude of the

Otago Board, along with its counterparts in other districts, underwent a decided change.

The Board estimated that it stood to lose about £8000 from its annual grant of £78,000 if the five year olds were excluded from the schools.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, in Otago, as in other districts, the effect of the loss would have fallen disproportionately upon the smaller schools. It was, in fact, the realisation by rural legislators that many small schools would have to close if the five year olds were excluded, that led to the government's intention in the matter being defeated. McKenzie and others persuaded parliament that the closure of small schools would have a disastrous effect upon rural settlement and thus forced the government to repeal its regulations relating to five year old children.<sup>95</sup>

The ironic fact was that few spokesmen were prepared to justify the attendance of infant children on educational grounds,<sup>96</sup> but the Board was well placed with the outcome. The Board was even more delighted to learn that in repealing the regulation on five year olds, the government had also dropped its intention to stop payment on all children who had passed standard six. It was the Board's belief that the latter provision had constituted nothing more or less than a blatant attempt by Fisher to destroy the District High Schools of which Otago had long been proud.

District high schools, which had been established in Otago as early as 1869,<sup>97</sup> and which were preserved intact under the 1877 Act, were ordinary primary schools with some additional classes for secondary pupils. They were controlled, like primary schools, by education boards, and usually, although not always, they were situated in rural districts. Their purpose was to provide opportunities for those pupils who lived far away from the regular and separately governed high schools to gain access to secondary education. Small fees were charged for attendance in the classes beyond standard six, but in order to ensure that education boards would not be tempted to turn district high schools into cheap competitors with the regular secondary institutions, Bowen laid it down in the Education Act that 'in every district high school instruction shall also be given in the ordinary branches of education prescribed by this Act to be given in the public schools'.<sup>98</sup> In 1877 there had been four district High Schools in existence in Otago.<sup>99</sup> Ten years later the Board still controlled the same number, although during the intervening years the district high at Oamaru had been disrated and its place taken by the translation of the Palmerston primary school to the status of a district high.

In the provincial days in Otago, it had been intended that there would be a close relationship between the district high schools in the rural areas and the Boys' and Girls' High Schools in Dunedin. Thus it was hoped that pupils who demonstrated the ability and who had completed several years of senior study at a district high school, would be able through scholarships to complete their secondary education in Dunedin before enrolling at the University of Otago. But this objective had never worked out very well in practice and after 1877, when the Dunedin High Schools were placed under separate governance, relationships between the two kinds of post-primary institutions in the province became more accidental than deliberate. Nevertheless, the Board continued to place a high degree of formal value on the secondary work provided in the district high schools. The senior classes in these schools were regularly inspected and subject to special report, and the Rectors of district high schools were paid higher than average salaries by the Board. The Board's secondary education scholarships could also be taken up at the district high schools as well as at the regular post-primary institutions. By 1887, in fact, the Board was able to report that on an annual average, 111 pupils, exclusive of scholarship holders, attended the secondary classes in district high schools. Furthermore, the record by that date revealed that eleven pupils, exclusive of scholarship holders, had matriculated directly from the district high schools to the University of Otago.<sup>100</sup>

The Board's consistent concern over the years had been to provide tangible evidence that children from more isolated geographical districts were not being denied access to secondary schooling if they could demonstrate that they would profit from more advanced academic study. There is little evidence to suggest that any Board members gave serious thought to the suitability of the advanced work in the district highs for rural pupils, although as early as 1879 Petrie described the district high schools as being 'mongrel institutions' which were 'pretentious in designation and temporary and makeshift in character'.<sup>101</sup> As far as the Board was concerned, the purpose, and the only purpose of the district high schools was to place the conventional high school curriculum in the way of country pupils when regular post-primary facilities were not otherwise available. Apart from this, in the Board's view, the district high schools had no justification as distinctive institutions. This was readily demonstrated by its decision in April 1887 to disrate the Oamaru District High School because regular secondary school facilities had since been established in the township.<sup>102</sup>

What the district high schools appealed to in Otago was the province's long-held sentiment in favour of providing educational opportunities for those who demonstrated merit. In 1878, Professor Shand had expressed the point concisely when he declared at a meeting of the Otago Educational Institute: 'Talent and genius are not the exclusive privilege of any class of society, and the country that suffers the smallest proportion of these inestimable natural endowments to go to waste will assuredly be the best fitted to hold its own in the national struggle for prosperity'.<sup>103</sup> It was this ideal which the Board believed that Fisher's proposal to stop payment on all children who had passed standard six, was designed to destroy. On 9 December, the day after the government's regulations relating to children under six and to those who had passed the primary standards were gazetted, Brown, as Chairman of the Board, telegraphed all Otago members of the Legislature urging them to vote in a bloc against the government's measures. Typical of the tone of Brown's persuasion was the message he transmitted to H.S. Fish: 'Education proposals and proclamation in yesterday's gazette are a serious blow to primary education and mean shutting clever children of poor people especially in country districts out of getting the training they ought to get – See John McKenzie and other Otago men'.<sup>104</sup> This was also the theme which the Board stressed a few days later, when in a letter drafted by Hislop and sent to Fisher and Atkinson, it was stated: 'The Board feels bound to express its conviction that the withdrawal of the grant [i.e. payment for those who had passed standard 6] will seriously cripple the resources of the Board, and to a large extent alter the character of the education afforded by the upper departments of the District High Schools ... thereby inflicting a severe blow on the cause of sound education by depriving a considerable number of the more highly talented and the more promising youth in the district, of the means of still further prosecuting their education at the most important point of their school life. It will lead most certainly to the discontinuance of the District High Schools which have proved and are proving of incalculable benefit to the youth of all classes of the community throughout the Otago district.'<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, when the government abandoned its decision to stop capitation payments on senior pupils, the Board had considerable satisfaction with the thought that its championing of the district high schools had been crowned with success and that it had saved itself a threatened loss of revenue of approximately £3000 p.a.<sup>106</sup>

Fisher's attempt to cease capitation payments on all pupils who had passed standard six, however, brought to light for the first time in

Otago, the developments of other forms of post-primary instruction which were occurring in the Board's schools and which were quite outside the district high school system allowed for in the Act. The 1877 Act defined 'School age' as being any age between the years of five and fifteen, but it also stipulated that 'No child above school age shall be admitted to any public school *without the special leave of the Committee*, unless such school is a district high school'.<sup>107</sup>

Accordingly, this meant that any child who had passed standard six and who was under fifteen years of age was still entitled to receive free primary education as of right. It also meant that at the school committees' discretion, a child over the age of fifteen could be admitted to the school, and receive the government's capitation allowance, whether or not he had passed standard six. In 1887, the Board had 500 children who were over the statutory age attending schools in its district, and the Secretary confessed in a confidential letter: 'I have little doubt that a number of the children attending our schools, and on account of whom we both receive and pay capitation allowances, are considerably over the age of sixteen'.<sup>108</sup> The only legal constraint under the Act was that older children in the ordinary primary schools were not entitled to receive instruction in the secondary subjects that were taught at the fee-paying high schools.

In its letter of protest to Fisher and Atkinson about the threatened destruction of the district high schools, the Board also stated that advanced work was provided in a number of the more largely attended and more efficiently conducted country schools'.<sup>109</sup> This statement needed to be read in conjunction with the fact that of the 1,922 children throughout the country who were recorded as doing post standard six work in the primary schools in 1887, 846 of them were resident in the Otago district.<sup>110</sup> This was a number that was obviously far in excess of the figure of 111 which the Board reported as being the total average enrolment of the district highs. The open question was whether the approximately 700 pupils who were enrolled in the various primary schools in what soon came to be called standard seven classes, were in fact receiving illegal free tuition in secondary subjects.

It seems unlikely that any of the standard seven pupils enrolled in ordinary schools would have been required to pay fees because such a demand would have contravened the provisions of the Education Act. The Act specifically authorised fees to be charged only for attendance in the senior classes of the district high schools, and the Board certainly insisted upon the payment of fees by those pupils. In one case in 1889,



where a parent tried to have his son stay on in standard six at the Palmerston District High School after he had already passed that standard, the Board ruled that free secondary education could not be had by such a backdoor method, but that 'the boy has a right to continue at the school in the 7th Standard *on payment of the necessary fees*'.<sup>111</sup>

On the other hand, it was by no means clear that standard seven pupils in the ordinary country schools were provided with different forms of advanced instruction because they did not pay the fees required for attendance at the district high schools. The Board was not forthright on the point, but what was known was that the ordinary country schools which catered for standard seven pupils were not always as large or as efficient as the Board had alleged them to be. In October 1888, for example, five teachers of medium-sized rural schools were informed separately: 'The Inspectors state that the pupil(s) in Std. 7 made a good appearance in the extra subjects studied. The Board, however, deems it to be unsatisfactory that so large a proportion of the Stds, 5&6 have failed. You may be able to give a satisfactory reason for this, otherwise a natural inference would be that some of the time and attention given might well have been devoted to Stds 5 & 6.'<sup>112</sup>

It was a matter of common knowledge, however, [although it was not spelled out in official returns] that during these years, the great growth in standard seven numbers in Otago had occurred neither in the district high schools nor in the larger rural schools. Rather it had taken place in the large schools within Dunedin. By 1887, for example, the Normal School had gained the reputation of being nothing less than a free district high school in which advanced pupils, in defiance of the Education Act, were openly prepared for Matriculation and Civil Service Examinations. In September 1886, the headmaster of the Normal School reached the point of asking the Board to provide him with staffing on the same scale as a district high school because the numbers of pupils requesting permission to enter the school's standard seven class had become so great that he was faced with the prospect of having to turn applicants away. The headmaster made it quite clear, however, that he did not wish the Board to entertain the notion of turning the Normal School into a district high school in order that fees might be charged for standard seven work. He believed that if this were done, his school would be brought into conflict with the Dunedin High Schools and 'many children who are now seeking entrance to the Normal School's advanced class will be driven away'.<sup>113</sup>

In the event, the Board did not act on the headmaster's request for more staff. But neither did it attempt to forbid the Normal School staff preparing pupils for secondary examinations. In this, as on other matters relating to standard seven work, the Board's policy was to give as little publicity as possible to the fact that by 1887, the number of senior primary school pupils in the province was increasing rapidly while attendance at the regular high schools, as in the rest of the country, had begun to decline.<sup>114</sup> In the years ahead, the Board was to become more than a little concerned about the relationship of standard seven work to the conventional academic secondary curriculum. But for the time being, it was content to preserve developments which were taking place in senior primary school classes, developments which had not been foreseen when Bowen had designed the Education Act in 1877.

The Board was not successful, however, in dissuading the government from implementing its other major retrenchment, the substitution of the 'strict average' in place of the 'working average' as the basis for the calculation of capitation payments. At Hislop's behest, the Board argued when in communication with the Premier in December 1887, that: 'This Board desires to represent to the Government and to Parliament the great hardship and inconvenience that will result to the Boards from the proposed payment of grants on 'Strict Average' instead of 'Working Average'. The loss of income and fluctuation would mean fluctuation in payments to teachers and school committees, more especially in the cases of outlying schools. The Board believes that the 'Working Average' regulation is most reasonable and convenient and urges that it be retained.'<sup>115</sup> It was a plea that fell upon deaf ears, however, because the government had calculated that it would save at least £8000 p.a. through the employment of the 'strict average', and in a time of economic hardship, parliament did not see why the country should have to pay for attendances that were not actually kept.

Nevertheless, it was soon apparent that the Board's indication of the educational disadvantages accruing from 'strict average' calculations was correct. Although the Board's salary scale had long cushioned teachers and committees from any sudden and short-lived losses in school attendance, the new economy measure meant that the remuneration of teachers was more than ever at the mercy of the state of the weather and the presence or absence of germs. As a result some of the defensive measures employed by committees and teachers bordered upon the comic. A common practice grew up of calling the roll shortly before the start of the school day to see if the attendance were

respectable. If the numbers were very poor, the committee, usually acting through the teacher, declared a school holiday in which case the absences did not count against the attendance record. This worked well until a given school ran out of the number of its allowable holidays, but another ploy much favoured in city schools was to call the roll half an hour before the start of the school day. If the attendance looked as if it might be less than satisfactory, the headmaster concerned would then employ 'runners' to hasten around the streets and gather up delinquents before the roll was officially called at the start of the school day. Often, in fact, teachers and committees gave the impression that they were forced by the grant system to devote as much energy to getting the children to school as they did teaching them once they got the pupils inside.

There was little that anybody could do about contagious illnesses however, and as the Board had predicted, the full viciousness of the grant system in this respect fell upon the smaller schools. Sometimes the presence or suspected presence of disease placed teachers and committees in an acute moral dilemma. In 1889, for example, the committee of the small Waiareka School asked the Board to dismiss the teacher because he had been guilty of writing a circular to parents which resulted in a serious decline in pupil attendance at the school. What the teacher had done, in fact; was to inform the parents that there were several cases of diphtheria in the district and that it was their responsibility to decide whether or not they should send their children to school. But the committee held steadfastly to the view that the rules being what they were, it was the duty of the teachers to avoid doing anything that might militate against the attendance record of the school. Such was the price of the capitation system, a price that had been exacerbated by the government's decision to save £8000 by introducing the 'strict average' calculation for payment.

Although the Board could do little about the problem of the effect of illness upon attendance, it refused to censure alleged delinquencies like those of the Waiareka teacher. Moreover, it attempted in other ways to ensure that the capitation system fell as lightly as possible upon individual teachers and committees. In August 1886, for example, Fisher circularised all boards informing them that the practice of declaring a school holiday when the numbers in attendance were small must cease. 'This practice', the Minister decreed, 'is to be regarded as falsification of the register. The School is held to be open any morning or afternoon if one child be present before the first half hour of ordinary school time

has passed.'<sup>116</sup> Fisher further asked the boards to distribute copies of the circular to all schools in their districts. But at its September meeting, the Board decided to postpone any action on the matter until it had consulted the inspectors. In its reply to the Minister, the Board reminded Fisher of the objections which it had raised in the previous December to the 'strict average' calculation, and concluded by stating its belief that the malpractices to which the Minister referred, did not occur in Otago.<sup>117</sup> It was a somewhat unsubtle way of informing the Minister that the Board intended to do nothing about his complaint. The Department's circulars were never, in fact, distributed to the schools.

After 1887, the Board could afford to take such an attitude to the Department, first because, in contrast to its unhappy relations with the school committees, the Board's stature as an intelligent defender of the public education system had increased, and second, because having made some of the substantial retrenchments which he had promised, Fisher's political reputation along with that of the government faded rapidly.<sup>118</sup> Thus, when the Minister published plausible evidence in 1888 to support his claim that the boards had been guilty of wasteful building expenditure over the previous ten years,<sup>119</sup> the Board did not even bother to defend its actions. Nor did it need to have concern when Fisher's *Public Schools Bill* was presented in 1889. This Bill, which entailed the abolition of education boards, was introduced at the same time that Fisher's career as Minister of Education came to an end in somewhat scandalous circumstances.<sup>120</sup> It was known that the government had no wish to pursue the matter of educational reform further, and there was therefore no urgency felt by Board members to defend themselves against the possibility of their being legislated out of existence.

Furthermore, the more moderate retrenchment measures which finally resulted from parliamentary action in December 1887, enhanced the popularity of the Board in a most unexpected way. Originally the Board had announced the likelihood of reductions in salaries and grants to committees which would have saved about £10,000, the figure that the government was thought likely to deduct from the Board's ordinary income. This was also the sum which the Otago Board offered to save through its own voluntary actions. When the government's retrenchments were finally announced, however, their cost to the Board was little more than £6000 p.a. in the first instance. Accordingly, the Board was able to adopt easier financial restrictions than it had first promised, while at the same time it had sufficient surplus revenue to

maintain the Training College at the cost of £2000 p.a. from its own resources in *lieu* of the government grant for teacher training which it had previously received. When the Board's retrenchments were finally put into operation in 1888, they were greeted by teachers and committees almost with a sense of relief. On the local scene, it was clear that the Board was the chief beneficiary from the obstacles which had been placed in the way of Fisher's intentions.

Yet it was also clear that after the Kaikorai Judgment in 1888, a growing body of local opinion believed that the Board's attitude towards controversial matters like appointments, had become unnecessarily supine. Press comment in the past had been quick to attack what it regarded as being dictatorial actions by the Education Board but in the months after Justice William's judgment it seemed to some that the control of appointments and dismissals had swung too far in the committees' favour. After noting the fact that the Board now had little say in appointments and less initiative in the matter of dismissal, the *Otago Daily Times* commented that 'It looks as if the Otago Board has been doing its best to demonstrate how easily it could be done without altogether'.<sup>121</sup> The *Evening Star* was also of the opinion that 'So long as Parliament makes Boards the distributors of the Education vote, they must possess the potential voice in deciding who shall receive the rewards due to professional success and length of service'.<sup>122</sup> There was, therefore, considerable encouragement after 1888, for the Board to attempt to regain some power of initiative in appointments and dismissals. Moreover, the Board's quest in this respect, received some degree of official sanction from the findings of the Royal Commission in the 'Kaikorai Case' which reported after the Supreme Court judgment had been declared. Carew, the magistrate conducting the inquiry, concluded that although the Board had breached a legal technicality in its dismissal of the headmaster, its overall policy in the case had been thoroughly fair. Carew further believed that the current procedures for appointing and dismissing teachers were entirely unsatisfactory and could be reformed only by placing full responsibility for such matters in the hands of education boards. In this way, teachers would be placed in positions 'they are best competent to fill'.<sup>123</sup>

In March 1883, one month after Carew's report had been published, Hislop moved at the Board meeting that in future the Board should not hold itself bound to appoint a candidate recommended by a school committee unless that candidate were first endorsed by the headmaster of the school. Hislop's motion was in accord with a recommendation of

the NZEI in 1886,<sup>124</sup> and was held by some to be justifiable on the grounds that a headmaster who was responsible for the management and efficiency of a school should be entitled to participate in the appointment of assistant teachers. But the motion was lost on voices, the majority of the Board believing that its effect would be to pass too much control over appointments directly into the hands of teachers. As the *Otago Daily Times* commented at the time, 'Dr Hislop, in this and other matters, seems to take up a somewhat too professional attitude, and to show a settled distrust of the Committees which detracts from the authority attending his utterances'.<sup>125</sup>

Since the proposition to give the teachers some professional participation in appointments proved to be unacceptable, the only alternative seemed to be that the Board should again try to reimpose some of the initiative which it had lost in appointment procedures as far back as 1880. Accordingly, in March 1889, the Board resolved to introduce the 'Three-Name' system of appointment whereby the Board selected the best three candidates for a position and sent forward only their names for the school committee concerned to make a final selection. At the same time the Board also attempted to end the widespread practice of 'buttonholing' by resolving that: 'No communication with regard to the appointment of a teacher shall be held between officers of the Board and any candidate, teacher, school committee, member of a committee, or other party except by official letter, and all such letters shall be deemed official letters and registered accordingly'.<sup>126</sup>

As might have been expected, the political reaction of school committees to the 'Three Name' system was intense, while the Board was immediately hard-pressed to maintain its stand. The Dunedin Committees Conference had no hesitation in describing the Board's resolutions as an insult. It further commented that all committees should carefully note those Board members who wished to 'sit on' them and make sure that such members did not get re-elected to the Board.<sup>127</sup> Several Board members could see the writing on the wall, and in June 1889, McKenzie moved that: 'So as to prevent injustice to applicants for positions in the service of the Board, that the resolutions of the Board passed on 20 March re the appointment of teachers and curtailing the number of applicants to be forwarded to the committees be revoked'.<sup>128</sup> After lengthy debate, the motion, which received the written support of 77 committees, was lost by two votes to six. But it was clear that the Board as a whole was far from convinced that it had hit upon the best

solution with its new system because in that same month, the Secretary wrote to five other boards asking for details of their appointments procedures.<sup>129</sup>

A major disappointment to the Board was the fact that the teachers, as a group, demonstrated that they were no more in favour of the 'Three Name' system of appointment than were the school committees. The teachers were deeply suspicious of possible partisanship by Board members and officials in given appointments. In July 1889, hard on the heels of McKenzie's motion before the Board, B.H. White, the headmaster of the Normal School<sup>130</sup> and leading spokesman for the Otago Educational Institute, declared that the new appointments procedure 'appeared to have been nothing but a gross system of favouritism from beginning to end'.<sup>131</sup> He warned the teachers and the public that under the 'Three Name' system there was a strong danger that the 'official element' on the Board would become autocratic. By this date, the Institute had decided that what was required was a grading scheme whereby the highest graded applicant became the automatic choice for appointment. As a result of White's criticisms of the 'Three Name' system and as a step towards the goal of attaining a grading scheme, the Institute resolved that: 'In order to provide a better system of promotion for teachers, and to secure the welfare of the schools, the Board be requested to classify the schools under its control, and thereafter fix a requisite classification for the various positions in the different classes of schools ....'<sup>132</sup> As far as the teachers were concerned, therefore, the substitution of committee-dominated appointments by a paternalistic oligarchy in the shape of the Board was not what they sought. What appealed to them instead at first sight was any appointments and promotion system that seemed designed to do away with obvious favouritism.

At first, the Board did not appear to understand what the teachers were seeking with their requests to classify schools and positions,<sup>133</sup> but it took serious objection to the charges which White had made. In tones reminiscent of its indictment of Farnie, the Board wrote to White: 'The Board recognizes the right of its teachers in common with other members of the community to express their opinions regarding any line of policy that may be adopted and followed by the Board .... Yet the Board, in justice to its members and the position they occupy, cannot allow that teachers in the employment of the Board should in their public utterances call into question the honesty of purpose and integrity of conduct of the members of the Board in their performance of the

official duties devolving upon them.’<sup>134</sup> The Board also demanded a full apology for, and retraction by White of the charges which he had made. But as the headmaster of the Normal School had a modicum of evidence for his assertions, the Board, after protracted correspondence, had to be content with a qualified apology. Public comment was not on the side of the Board in the matter. The *Otago Daily Times* concluded that ‘the Board, in the present instance is playing the part of the frail prude too conscious of her own frailty’,<sup>135</sup> and the immediate result was a coolness in relations between the Board and the Institute which lasted over a period of several years.

This was more than a little unfortunate because the controversy surrounding White and his criticisms of the ‘Three Name’ system obscured the fact that the logic of the Board’s attempt to reform appointments procedures was to provide greater professional autonomy for its teachers. Although it was not prepared to go as far as Hislop desired, the Board was undeniably trying to free teachers from being completely dominated by aggressive school committees. Evidence for this can be seen in the tightening of the Secretary’s approach to the question of school committee interference with the professional work of the teacher in the classroom. In 1885, Pryde wrote tentatively to one committee: ‘I have shown your letter to the Inspectors. They say that the headmaster of a school is responsible for the organisation and management of his school and may make what arrangements he thinks best for the proper working of the school. If Mr Pollock makes the alternatives you refer to, I question if the committee can interfere.’<sup>136</sup> By 1889, however, the Secretary was in no doubt about the point. To the Lovells Flat School Committee, he wrote: ‘Headmasters have the power to arrange the work of their schools as they may think proper without reference to either the school committees or the Education Board. If the teacher thinks it advisable to change the hours of sewing, he is quite at liberty to do so without consulting anyone.’<sup>137</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1889 the fact remained, as it had done in earlier years, that the greatest obstacle in the way of further professional autonomy and worthwhile school reform was the national syllabus which was employed as a yardstick to measure both pupils and teachers but which was the product of a thoroughly imperfect liaison between the Department, the inspectors, and the teachers in the schools. The sentiment expressed by radical members of the Board in 1887, in favour of abandoning all specific syllabus prescriptions and replacing them with broad guidelines, gave full recognition to the deadening influence of



syllabus prescriptions on the work in the schools. But the alternative of 'guidelines' required the community to entrust teachers with more responsibility than at any time it was prepared to do. It also cut right across the desire to develop a national uniformity in school provision which had been paramount in legislators' minds when they had delegated the task of syllabus construction to the Education Department in 1877. Upon reflection, it became apparent to the Board by 1888 that less radical but more realistic solutions were called for.

The Board's determination after 1887 to keep the Training College open, was one sign of its faith that in the long run the community would come to have more confidence in the capabilities of properly prepared teachers. More immediately, however, it turned its attention once more to the problem of the poor liaison between Habens in the Department and the inspectors employed by the boards. Building upon its tentative support for the suggestion in 1883 that there should be more professional consultation between the inspectors and the Inspector-General, the Board resolved in August 1883: 'That in the opinion of this Board it is desirable in the interest of primary education that a conference of the inspectors of the respective districts should take place, say, triennially, and the first should be held in Wellington at the earliest convenient time. That a circular be sent to the several Boards asking for their co-operation in giving effect to the a forgoing view.'<sup>138</sup>

The somewhat coy way in which the Board managed to avoid referring directly to the Inspector-General or to the Department in its resolution, did not disguise the significance of the Board's decision. Board members were still as sensitive as ever about the importance of their autonomy in relation to the Department and the Minister of Education. Furthermore, by 1888 the Board had every reason to argue that its autonomy as an educational authority had assisted it to fight successfully for a moderation of the retrenchments which an economy-minded Ministry had sought to impose. Yet by this date, the Board had also come to realise more fully, and of its own volition, that the separation of professional powers which had occurred under the 1877 Act, and which had been reinforced by the boards themselves, had been purchased at the expense of genuine educational considerations.

It was also noteworthy that by 1888, calls for greater liaison between the inspectors and the Department were coming from Board members rather than from the inspectors. This was consistent with what was perhaps the most marked general change in Board politics over the period 1885 to 1889. During this period, the majority of Board members

showed a much greater concern with educational, as distinct from purely administrative decisions than had previously been the case. This change was forced on them first by unsympathetic government policies and second by the evident and growing dissatisfaction of many of the teachers and the public with current schooling practices. Nevertheless, it was clear that some Board members welcomed the opportunity of their office to publicise the need for educational reform. The calibre of the work of Brown and McGregor was remarkably high and it was not to the discredit of either man that the Board's electoral base and the statutory limitations on its powers defeated their best efforts.

These years served to show yet again that because it was electorally beholden to the school committees, the Board could find no acceptable solution to the phenomenon of parochial appointments, a fact which paradoxically reinforced the tendency to judge teachers by examination results. On the other hand, the Board was also limited in what it could achieve in the way of syllabus reform as long as the government remained generally unconvinced about its urgency. As a defender of the system of public education, the Board had done well. But as a body that was able to promote educational reform successfully, the Board had yet to show what it could do. Its new interest in working with, rather than in isolation, from, the Department to further the progress of educational reform was, nevertheless, a hopeful sign. When the Ballance Government came into power in 1891, the Board was able to use this development in its thinking, and the confidence it had gained as an educational authority in the previous six years, to good effect.

## NOTES

1. NZPD Vol 54 1886 p.121 This figure is conservative because it omitted the cost for buildings. A more likely total would be half a million pounds.
2. *Ibid* 1887 Vol 57 p.177
3. *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* Pt 4 p.157
4. ODT 27 Apr 1885
5. OEB Report 1885 p.7
6. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 I-8 pp.64-68
7. *Ibid* pp.9-12
8. OEB LB 28 1884/5 Pryde/Goodwood Sch Cte 26 May 1885 p.891
9. ODT 22 Nov 1889
10. OEB Report 1887 App G p.37
11. OEB LB 34 1889 Pryde/Blackstone Sch Cte 29 Aug 1889 p.713

12. *Ibid*
13. ODT 28 Sep 1888
14. *Ibid* 29 June 1885 See also ODT 26 Aug 1885
15. OEB Report 1885 App G pp.37-38
16. ODT 17 June 1886
17. *Ibid* 16 Oct 1885
18. L.Breward, *Godless Schools* 1967 Christchurch Presbyterian Bookroom p.31
19. ODT 17 Dec 1886 The organization and persons consulted included: The Minister of Education, inspectors from three education boards as well as those from the Otago Board, the North Canterbury Board, two provincial educational institutes, 35 school committees in Otago, 11 private individuals, and 8 prominent teachers in Otago.
20. *Ibid* 17 Dec 1886
21. *Ibid* 6 July 1886
22. *Ibid* 11 Aug 1886
23. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 I-8 p.42
24. ODT 24 June 1887
25. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 I-8
26. NZPD 1887 Vol 57 p.170
27. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 I-8 p.24
28. *Ibid* p.62
29. ODT 22 Aug 1888
30. *Ibid* 23 Jan 1888
31. *Ibid*
32. OEB LB 33 1888/9 Pryde/Waiareka Sch Cte 29 June 1888 p.212
33. ODT 18 Oct 1889
34. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 E-1B pp. 45-48
35. OEB LB 30 1886 Pryde/South Cant. Edn Board p.650
36. *Ibid*
37. *Ibid* 31 1886/7 Pryde/Mt Cargill Sch Cte 17 Mar 1887 p.420
38. *Ibid* 31 1886/7 Pryde/Naseby Sch Cte 18 Aug 1887 p.991
39. *Ibid* 32 1887/8 Pryde/Kaikorai Sch Cte 15 Sep 1887 pp.53-54
40. NZPD 1887 Vol 59 pp.827-28
41. ODT 31 Jan 1888
42. OEB LB 33 1888/9 Pryde/McLauchlan 17 May 1888 pp. 32-33
43. ODT 26 May 1888
44. *Ibid* 7 Feb 1886
45. *Education Act* [Clause 84:4]
46. NZPD 1886 Vol 54 pp. 270-274
47. I.Cumming, *Glorious Enterprise op.cit.* p. 147
48. ODT 8 Aug 1887
49. OEB LB 32 1887/8 p.47
50. ODT 7 Feb 1888
51. AJHR 1889 Vol 2, E-1 p.xvii
52. As a matter of interest the new regulations were written by Stout, who after his political defeat again became the Board's solicitor.

53. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 17 July 1890 pp.322-23
54. *Ibid* 33 1888/9 Pryde/Teacher Adams Flat Sch 14 Feb 1889 p. 929
55. *Ibid* 33 1888/9 Pryde/A. Solomon 25 Jan 1889 p.868
56. ODT 25 Apr 1887
57. I.Cumming, *Glorious Enterprise. op. cit.* p.107
58. ODT 25 Apr 1887
59. R.Stout quoted in the *New Zealand Schoolmaster* Aug 1887
60. ODT 26 Apr 1887
61. *Ibid* 30 July 1887
62. OEB LB 31 1886/7 Pryde/Stenhouse 1 Aug 1887 p.933
63. ODT 2 Aug 1887
64. *Ibid* 8 Aug 1887
65. AJHR 1886 Vol 2 E-1 p.101 Circ 16
66. ODT 15 Dec 1885
67. OEB LB 30 1886 Pryde/Sec. Westland Edn Board 23 June 1886 p.526
68. ODT 17 June 1887
69. J.D.S.McKenzie, George Fisher and Educational Reform, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* Vol 5 No 2 Nov 1970 pp. 115-124
70. ODT 18 Nov 1887
71. NZPD 1887 Vol 59 p.875
72. The 'working' average calculation, which had been allowed since 1873, meant that whenever attendance for a half day fell below half the number on the roll, it was legitimate to discount the difference. The 'strict' average abolished this considerable concession.
73. AJHR 1888 Vol 2 E-1 p.xxiv
74. *NZ Gazette* Vol 2 1887 p.1505 No 76 8 Dec 1887
75. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Fisher 15 Dec 1887 pp. 3-6
76. NZPD 1887 Vol 59 p. 877
77. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 I-8 pp.27-29
78. OEB Report 1885 App K p.67
79. OEB LB 29 1885/6 Pryde/W.S.Fitzgerald 18 Feb 1886 p.942
80. The School of Art had been established in 1871. The Board exercised loose supervision of the School.
81. OEB Lb 30 1886 Report 13 Mar 1886 pp.12-20
82. *Ibid*
83. ODT 9 Jan 1886
84. *Ibid* 20 Sep 1886
85. *Ibid* 17 Sep 1886 Habens/Pryde 22 June 1886
86. OEB LB Gov 2 Pryde/Habens 16 June 1886 pp.632-36
87. *Ibid*
88. ODT 17 Sep 1886
89. OEB LB 30 1886 Pryde/Fitzgerald 18 June 1886 p.509
90. *Ibid* Pryde/Fitzgerald 21 Oct 1886 p.929
91. OEB Report 1888 p.10
92. AJHR 1887 Vol 2 I-8 pp. 33-34
93. *Ibid* pp.9-12

94. OEB LB 32 1887/8 Brown/McKenzie 9 Dec 1887 p.373
95. *NZ Gazette* 1888 Vol 1 No 1 p.1 5 Jan
96. Richard Seddon was one of the few legislators who chose to laud the value of infant schooling. He thought it was wonderful 'to hear children between five and six singing their little ditties'. NZPD Session XXV No 889
97. *Otago Ordinances* 'Grammar Schools Ordinance 1869' Session XXV No 285 p.1521
98. *Education Act* [Clause 56]
99. The schools rated as district high schools after 1877 were located at Lawrence, Milton (Tokomairiro), Oamaru and Port Chalmers. The Port Chalmers D.H.S. was regarded as being sufficiently far away from the city high schools to justify its existence.
100. OEB LB 31 1886/7 Pryde/Sec. South Canterbury Edn Bd. 16 June 1887 p.782
101. AJHR 1880 Vol 2 H-1 p.37
102. The Board's decision to disrate the district high school was in fact highly controversial and had been delayed from the first vote on the matter taken in 1883. The problem was that the Waitaki Board of Governors, despite strong feeling in Oamaru, decided to provide only for a boys' secondary school. The Education Board believed that the exclusivist tendencies of the Waitaki governors were outrageous but it eventually closed its D.H.S. in the hope that the Waitaki Board would then be forced to make some provision for a girls' secondary school.
103. ODT 24 Apr 1878
104. OEB LB 32 1887/8 Brown/H.S.Fish (M.P.) 9 Dec 1887 Telegrams also sent to J.McKenzie, Hon. T.Fergus, J.Mills, Scobie McKenzie [pp.373-376
105. *Ibid* Gov 3 Pryde/Fisher 15 Dec 1887 pp.7-8 Copy also sent to H.A.Atkinson
106. *Ibid* 31 1887/8 Brown/McKenzie 9 Dec 1887 p.373
107. *Education Act* [Clause 83] Author's emphasis
108. OEB LB 31 1886/7 Pryde/Sec. South Canterbury Edn Board. 17 Aug 1887 p.959
109. *Ibid* Gov 3 Pryde/Fisher 15 Dec 1887 pp.7-8
110. AJHR 1888 Vol 2 E-1 p.2
111. OEB LB 34 1889 Pryde/Palmerston Sch Cte 17 Oct 1889 p.869 Author's emphasis
112. *Ibid* 33 1888/9 Pryde/Teacher Hampden Sch 23 Oct p.538
113. ODT 3 Sep 1886 White/Pryde
114. I.A.McLaren, Secondary Schools in the N.Z. Social Order (Unpublished PhD) Victoria University Wellington 1965, p.245
115. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Atkinson 15 Dec 1887 pp.1-2
116. AJHR 1889 Vol 2 E-1 p.xvii
117. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Fisher 20 Sep 1888
118. McKenzie, George Fisher and Educational Reform *op.cit*
119. AJHR 1888 E-1 C
120. J.Bassett, Sir Harry Atkinson and the Conservative Faction in N.Z. Politics, *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol 2 No 2 Oct 1968 pp.130-47
121. ODT 2 Apr 1889

- 122. *Evening Star* 1 Apr 1889
- 123. ODT 16 Feb 1888
- 124. *Ibid* 8 Jan 1886
- 125. *Ibid* 17 Mar 1888
- 126. *Ibid.* 22 Mar 1889
- 127. *Ibid* 3 Apr 1889
- 128. *Ibid* 21 June 1889
- 129. OEB LB 34 1889 pp. 505-507
- 130. David Renfrew White, later Principal of the Training College and first Professor of Education at the University of Otago.
- 131. ODT 5 July 1889
- 132. *Ibid*
- 133. OEB LB 33 1888/9 Pryde/Sec. Otago Edn Institute 19 July 1888 p.284
- 134. *Ibid* 34 1889 Pryde/White 17 July 1889 p.555
- 135. ODT 26 July 1889
- 136. OEB LB 29 1885/6 Pryde/Flag Swamp Sch Cte 17 July 1885 p.110
- 137. *Ibid* 34 1889 Pryde/Lovells Flat Sch Cte 14 May 1889 p.320
- 138. ODT 17 Aug 1888

## ***Chapter 6***

### ***The dawn of Socialism and the beginning of Educational Reform 1890-1894***

During the years 1890 to 1894, the finances of the Colony began to recover slowly. Furthermore, a dramatic change in the country's political fortunes took place with the defeat of the Atkinson Ministry at the polls in 1890. The new government which was led by John Ballance and which proclaimed its chief concern to be the amelioration of the lot of the common man, initiated the long period of Liberal Party ascendancy in New Zealand politics. After Balance's death in 1893, the leadership of the government passed to Richard John Seddon who by force of his colourful personality and his brilliant command of political strategy, retained the reins of power until his death in 1906. Many contemporary observers regarded the liberal Party's rise to power as constituting nothing less than a revolution through the ballot box, but the truth was that political initiative had been moving steadily away from the rural dominated oligarchy and towards urban and industrial interests before Atkinson's defeat. In 1889, plural voting, a privilege which the wealthy had enjoyed, was abolished with the writing into law of the principle of one man one vote. The new parliament elected in the following year, reflected the major shift that had taken place in political power through the alteration of the franchise.<sup>1</sup>

The election of the Balance government also reflected the growing reaction in the community against social and economic injustices which had resulted from long years of depression and retrenchment in government spending. The plight of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers who had often been ruthlessly exploited in a situation where supply far outstripped demand, was exceeded only by those who were without employment at all and who subsisted on charity. Commonly, women in the cities sought to maintain their homes on pittances which they received from piece-work tailoring and sewing. Although none of these things was new, communities demonstrated an increasing disinclination to accept them as part of the inevitable fate of economic fortune.

Dunedin, then the leading industrial centre in the country, contained some of the worst areas of poverty. In 1888, the Rev. Rutherford Waddell delivered a notable sermon in the city entitled 'The Sin of Cheapness'. Speaking to respectable churchgoers, Waddell recounted and condemned the harrowing conditions of work that were resulting from the exploitation of piece-work clothing labourers by the manufacturing interests in Dunedin. His attack upon the wealthy mercantile class in the city attracted so much attention that it was followed up by a series of press investigations, the horrifying results of which forced the government to take some action. In 1889, Atkinson set up a national committee of inquiry into labour practices which became known as the 'Sweating Commission'. In the following year, the Commission tabled its report which revealed in unequivocal terms that industrial exploitation of the weak by the strong was common throughout the land.

By this date, however, spokesmen for those who were no longer prepared to wait for government action, had set about organising unions to fight against victimisation by employers. Robert Stout, and other public men of liberal persuasion, participated in the birth of the trade union movement in New Zealand when they helped to found the Dunedin Tailoresses' Union in 1889. The union movement underwent its first trial of strength in the great Maritime Strike of 1890, the result of which left the country in little doubt that a new political force had arrived upon the scene. Although the unions were not collectively well organised at first, they made their presence felt in the General Election in 1890. In Dunedin, several candidates who stood specifically as labour representatives were elected to parliament, while the newly-formed *Peoples Political Association* asked supporters of socialist persuasion to fight for such measures as a tax on land speculation, a mandatory eight hour day, a tax on absentee landholders, and security to rights of labour.

The association did not neglect education in its platform, but as was common with left wing thinking in New Zealand during these years, education was regarded as being subordinate to other desired social and political reforms. During the election campaign of 1890, labour candidates were happy to repeat Stout's argument of earlier years, that the national education system must be protected at all costs from the machinations of denominationalists and the penny-pinching wealthy. There was also general assent among liberal spokesmen that the working man's son should have the opportunity 'to go to the top of the tree'.<sup>2</sup> Comments like these contrasted significantly with those that had



carried the day on public platforms at the height of retrenchment sentiment in the previous election. But beyond this, they contained nothing that was vitally new as far as educational thought or aspiration was concerned.

Stout evinced one further argument for increased schooling which *did* reflect changing social conditions. In January 1890, he declared, 'The time is coming when labour will be properly organised, and then child labour will not be allowed, as it has been, to compete with adult labour'.<sup>3</sup> Stout was soon to be proved correct. One effect of attempts by the Ballance government to remedy cheap labour practices was that more children were encouraged to stay on at school until a later age. Nevertheless, there is little evidence to suggest that socialist leaders had given much critical thought to the kind of education that was being provided in the schools. The sole specific educational reform sought by the 'People's Political Association' in 1890 was that textbooks throughout the country should be uniform and be published by the government as cheaply as possible. Union spokesmen were mainly concerned to see that the national education system was preserved, that opportunities were provided for educational advancement regardless of individual wealth, that children were prevented from competing upon an over supplied labour market, and that the number and cost of school books was reduced to a level that could more easily be afforded by parents. Demands such as these were not without point, but they did little to bring a new perspective to an education system that was in need of review after years of retrenchment and lukewarm interest on the part of the government.

Critics closer to the educational scene were more aware that the time for educational changes of some magnitude had come. Even the most conservative of educational administrators appeared to sense that resting upon the laurels of past achievements was not enough. In 1889, Alfred Saunders, the outspoken Chairman of the South Canterbury Education Board, wrote in his annual report, 'New Zealand has not entirely failed in her bold attempt to grapple with a great subject [national education], the formidable difficulties of which no Government has ever yet been able to surmount with complete satisfaction and success'.<sup>4</sup> Saunders' argument caught nicely both a sense of relief that the education system had survived political and economic adversity and an awareness that the schools were not perfect. From this date, in fact, educational administrators were to find that they were required to make greater attempts to accommodate programmes in

the schools in line with the expectations of a community that was becoming more sophisticated in its educational thinking.

When Balance's Ministry took office on 24 January 1891, interested educational parties were quick to applaud the Premier's choice of the young William Pember Reeves as Minister of Education. Reeves was without doubt one of the most brilliant intellectuals ever to have graced the New Zealand political scene. Although of patrician background and schooling, he was an ardent disciple of Fabian socialism. This, combined with the enthusiasm of youth, made him a politician admirably suited to promote his declared ideal of the state acting as midwife to a civilised community.<sup>5</sup> Reeves possessed the ability to pick the essence of an argument or problem with almost uncanny speed. He lacked Stout's plebian background and familiarity with the practical problems that faced teachers and educational administrators, but his brilliant public speaking and his acute sense of political timing made him the far more effective politician. Reeves was known to be a firm defender of the national education system and had in fact entered parliament in 1887 with this as his credo. Altogether, therefore, the omens in 1891 for those who were interested in educational reform looked to be particularly good. Even the *Otago Daily Times*, which was highly suspicious of the Minister's Fabian predilections, relented sufficiently to hope that with the responsibilities of office 'this promising young man will shake off many of the crudities of opinion to which he has given utterance ... and learn that the reconstruction of society is not quite such an easy thing as it looks on paper'.<sup>6</sup>

It was soon apparent, however, that Reeves would not be able to make any quick and spectacular changes in the education system. The Ballance Ministry was not eager to make significant alterations to the 1877 Act and Reeves was no more able than his predecessors to reform schooling practices purely through Ministerial decree. This was something that Reeves learned quickly. In February 1891, after he had been in office for only a matter of weeks, he tried to direct the Otago Education Board as to the texts to be used in its schools. The result was a signal failure. Thereafter, Reeves shifted his policy and invited the education boards to take a leading part in initiating and pressing for educational reforms. It was not a role that Reeves particularly enjoyed. Compared with his other work as Minister of Labour, in which he was able to design far-reaching industrial legislation, he found his duties in the Education Portfolio to be hard and relatively unrewarding. Nevertheless, his educational policies were not without imagination and

they were marked with a brand of political realism which brought considerable benefit to the schools of the nation. Under Reeves' guidance, the education boards were to have the finest opportunity they had ever received to make constructive contributions to educational development.

Reeves went to considerable lengths to publicise his belief that a Minister of Education should always seek the advice of education boards with respect to any changes that were to be made in the details of the system.<sup>7</sup> He also made it clear that in his view the job of the Education Department was to work with the boards rather than to try to take existing functions out of their hands.<sup>8</sup> In this way, despite his unfortunate initial encounter with the Otago Board, he was soon able to moderate the distrust of the Department by the boards. There now seemed to be every opportunity for the Otago Board to build upon its energetic attempts to promote reform in the difficult years after 1885.

Unfortunately, however, Reeves' accession to office coincided with a period in which the Board's local prestige suffered its most serious reversal in fortune since the Kaikorai Case in 1883. This was due in part to the changed composition of the Board's membership, but it was caused mainly through the flare up once more of the old controversies over teacher appointments and dismissals. By 1890, the only Board members who stood out as possessing something of distinctive worth to offer in educational policy were Hislop and a new member, John MacGregor.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it had become apparent by that date that the Board no longer commanded the degree of respect which it had earlier attained under the chairmanship of Dr Brown. One symptom of this was the fact that the Board as a whole was quite unable to rally community support in 1890 against a determined and successful attempt by school committees to destroy the 'Three Name' appointments system which had been established in the previous year.

In January 1890, the Dunedin City and Suburban School Committees Conference resolved by an overwhelming majority 'That this Conference recommends committees not to vote for the re-election of those members of the Board who support the "Three Name" system'.<sup>10</sup> The Conference also decided to ask all candidates for seats on the Board to state publicly whether or not they would fight for the abolition of the 'Three Name' system and approve of committees being consulted according to the definition of 'consult' that was provided by Justice Williams in the Kaikorai Case. Most, although not all,<sup>11</sup> of the city and suburban committees supported the Conference's stand, and a number of

committees of small rural schools added their voice to the protest.<sup>12</sup> Hislop and James Fulton, two Board members who were standing for re-election, believed that their records of past services to educational affairs would enable them to withstand political pressure of this kind. They refused to endorse proposals to abolish the 'Three Name' system, proposals which Hislop claimed had no standing because they emanated from the Conference which was just 'a few gentlemen sitting in Dunedin'. On this occasion, however, the well-worn ploy of setting country against town was not successful. In the resulting election, two candidates who promised to support the abolition of the appointments system headed the poll, while Fulton received a very small number of votes. The two most successful candidates soon demonstrated that their contributions to educational debate were far from being worthy of note. Nevertheless, they finished in the poll well ahead of Hislop who was re-elected by a mere three votes. The school committees had made their voice felt with a vengeance.

In April 1890, the Board bowed to what seemed to be the inevitable outcome of the elections. The 'Three Name' system was abolished and the appointments procedures reverted to the former practice of sending virtually all the candidates' names to the respective committees. Indeed, the Board now appeared to go to the other extreme and make no attempt whatever to exercise any selection or opinion of its own in appointments. Some committees even went so far as to object to the fact that they now had to exercise so much responsibility for selection,<sup>13</sup> and the extreme case appears to have been reached in September 1892 when one unfortunate committee was faced with the task of going through the names of 57 applicants for a single junior teaching position.<sup>14</sup> The Board could argue with some justification that its decision was dictated by political realism but its reputation as an educational authority was not thereby enhanced. The *Otago Daily Times* now described the Board as limp and flaccid with no more a mind of its own than any other wooden figurehead,<sup>15</sup> while Mark Cohen concluded that since the Board had chosen once more to abrogate its role in appointments there was little left for it to do.<sup>16</sup> Even the Board Secretary gave up pretending that the Board's voice had any weight in appointments. To one inquirer, he wrote: 'As you are no doubt aware, all this Board does is to receive applications and send then on to the committees who recommend and the Board simply approves of the committee's choice. Committees are very often influenced by personal interviews, by pressure of friends and many other considerations which local candidates can bring to bear, and a teacher at a distance no matter what experience and testimonials

is placed at a great disadvantage.’<sup>17</sup> There could be little doubt therefore, that by 1893 parochialism was an even more marked feature of appointments in Otago than it had been in 1880.

The Board’s members were still anxious to show, however, that they were neither mindless spokesmen for the committees nor puppets in the hands of the Board’s permanent officials. That opinion on the Board was especially sensitive on the latter point, was shown in December 1891 when it was discovered that Pryde had fallen into the habit of appointing teachers to temporary positions without consulting members. Since speed was the essence of a temporary appointment, the Secretary had some justification for acting in the matter without waiting for the formal approval of the Board at its regular meetings. But it seemed to a special committee of inquiry set up by the Board, that Pryde had interpreted this to mean that he need never consult the Board on temporary appointments at all. In its report which was released to the press, the committee observed that ‘the fact that Mr Pryde could have done all that he did as if it were a matter of course, shows clearly that it has become habitual with him to interfere in matters with which he has no concern’.<sup>18</sup> After strongly censuring the Secretary for his actions, the committee concluded: ‘...all the circumstances of this case show that through the good nature, or rather the laxity of the Board, Mr Pryde has been allowed to act in such a way as to justify the popular impression that he is the Board.’<sup>19</sup>

The report was adopted by a majority of one and thereafter Pryde was debarred from overt control over teacher appointments of any kind. To those critics who believed that ‘the jobbery and corruption distinguishing the Otago Education Board is not likely to be swept away until Mr Pryde is first disposed of’,<sup>20</sup> the Board’s decision was well received. Others, however, were inclined to the view that the Secretary’s crime was not sufficiently heinous to warrant the public castigation which he had received. As a result of the Board election in 1892, the Board was composed of a majority who were sympathetic to the Secretary, but in the following year the position was reversed when candidates discovered that Pryde was a much easier target of political attack than was the conservatism of school committees over such matters as appointments.

In contrast to previous Board elections, the electoral battle in 1893 was fast and furious. Amidst a background of unedifying campaign tactics, candidates declared themselves to be either Pryde-ites or anti-Pryde-ites and promised certainty in educational progress if they

were elected. One candidate informed the school committees that a prominent opponent should not receive their vote because he knew on good authority that his opponent was leaving the country in several months time and would not therefore be able to attend to educational affairs. Since the claim was a pure fabrication, the aggrieved party had to issue a denial in the newspapers, but he had no answer to the action of another quick thinking candidate who published a list of voting results for the benefit of some country committees which had still to vote. Not surprisingly, the figures purported to show that he was heading the poll and although it was not successful in this instance, this was an abuse which served to highlight undesirable features of the Board election system which had long been a matter of critical comment.

The election resulted in the defeat of Hislop whose close relationship with the Secretary was known to all, and in the constitution of a Board that was evenly matched in terms of those members who tended to support the Secretary and the inspectors and those who alleged that the 'officials' sought continually to undermine the lay authority of the Board. Surveying the scene in February 1893, the critic '*Civis*' in the *Otago Daily Times* ruminated that 'what with Pryde-ites and anti-Prydelites, Liberals and Conservatives, future meetings of the Board promise to be as lively as a synod engaged in a heresy hunt'.<sup>21</sup> It was a prediction, however, that proved to be incorrect because after this date it was apparent that attacks upon 'officials' were no longer needed by Board members in order to build up a sense of their own worth. More importantly, the public impression that the Board's affairs were no longer being dictated by its paid officers had the happy result of encouraging an increased number of able men to offer themselves for election to a seat on the Board. Accordingly, the Board membership by 1894 was the most enlightened and authoritative that it had ever been. Apart from MacGregor, it included J.F.M Fraser who was now anxious to serve another term, Thomas McKenzie who was later to serve the country as Prime Minister, and Mark Cohen who had at last been persuaded that education boards might after all be the best means of promoting educational reform. Men like these testified to the public that the Board had been successful in rescuing itself from the parlous state into which it had fallen in 1890. It was as well that the Board possessed this resilience because during these years, in addition to practical problems with which it was familiar, the Board was also called upon to deal with some direct effects of socialist politics and with new and positive challenges presented by Reeves.

Financial problems which had begun to press in on the Board after 1887, did not ease with the advent of the Ballance Government in 1891. In some respects they became more difficult, while their attempted solution did nothing to heighten the Board's popularity. In general, these were still lean economic years and Reeves could not afford to restore the 'working average' basis for capitation payments until 1894. In particular, the Board was faced with the unpleasant fact that although it was continuing to pay its teachers salaries that were far above the New Zealand average, the population drift to the North Island was now having a marked effect upon its capitation income. The total average attendance in Otago's schools fell in 1890 and again in 1891. In the following year it recovered slightly, but in 1893 the outbreak of a measles epidemic wreaked havoc in school attendance. More serious from the point of view of the Board's long-term consideration however, was the fact that by December 1894, the total school attendance and the total average attendance in the province's schools was smaller than it had been in 1890.

Although it was increasingly forced to exercise new retrenchments in expenditure in order to accommodate to its reduced income, the Board was reluctant to conclude that it was facing a long-term population trend rather than a temporary shortfall in attendance. Hence it tended to concentrate its remedial action upon dramatic occurrences like the measles epidemic in 1893. Reeves was approached by the Board as early as May of that year to see if some relief could be afforded from the likely financial consequences of the epidemic. By July the full extent of the disaster had become clear. The disease had caused a loss in average attendance of 348 pupils [i.e. a loss in income to the Board of nearly £1000] but because the Board allowed some tolerance for temporary loss of attendance in its salary schedules, the immediate loss to teachers was only £150.<sup>22</sup> From its already straitened finances, the Board was required to make up the deficit.

After further energetic lobbying by Board members, Reeves decided to base payments for the June quarter of 1893 upon the 'working' rather than the 'strict' average attendance. The loss in attendance had been so severe, however, that this concession offered little by way of relief. Apart from making a special plea to John McKensie, the cabinet minister and former Board member,<sup>23</sup> the Board urged Otago members of parliament to use their best energies to persuade the government to provide a greater amount of financial compensation. Pryde also travelled to Wellington and made personal representations explaining the

difficulties which faced the Board. The government, however, claimed that it could do no more, nor could it be denied that beyond the immediate problems occasioned by the epidemic, the Board was entering a plea for income to which on the basis of its general attendance figures it was no longer entitled.

The result was that the Board had to maintain its policy of exercising retrenchments in teachers salaries and committee grants, retrenchments which were much less politically acceptable than had been those in 1887 because they were not shared by other board districts or by the community at large. Teachers exhibited anger at what they deemed to be financial mismanagement on the part of the Board, while the Chairman of the Dunedin Conference summed up the grumbings of many committeemen about meagre school allowances when he claimed, 'Concerts, bazaars, subscription lists, and shows of some kind are in constant demand, and have become a perfect weariness of the flesh for many members of school committees'.<sup>24</sup> The measles epidemic was but one dramatic example of the generally uncomfortable financial circumstances which faced the Board throughout these years. They were circumstances too which along with the appointments controversies did nothing to help the Board win community support when it found itself unexpectedly under attack from the newly-organised 'voice of labour' in 1890 and 1891.

The Board was justifiably proud of the textbooks regulations which it had devised after much consultation and debate in 1888. Two years later it had no suspicion that those very regulations were about to become the focus of a national industrial conflict. True to its intention, the Board had refused to add new titles to the authorised list which was planned to remain unamended until 1893. One publisher who sought to have a title on New Zealand history authorised for use in the province's schools, was informed in February 1890 that after giving the matter its consideration, 'the Board had decided that as it had laid down some time ago that it would make no further additions from the 1st January 1890 it had no course open but to decline your request'.<sup>25</sup> In ruling thus against changes which could be argued to have some merit, the Board was acting consistently with the policy on textbooks which had been worked out with considerable tribulation in earlier years.

One apparently small change was made however. In April 1890, the inspectors asked the Board to amend the regulations so that children in standards one and two, as well as those in standard three, would be required to be examined in reading on one supplementary reader in



addition to the regular reading text. The inspectors argued that under the existing regulations there was too strong a temptation placed on the teacher to get children to learn one reading book by heart, thus inflating the pass rate in the annual examinations. The Board was impressed with this point and also the fact that the inspectors quoted precedent in Scottish education in support of their request. In August 1890 the regulations were so amended, despite strong opposition on educational grounds being expressed by the Otago Educational Institute. But the timing of the change could not have been more unfortunate. The supplementary readers required under the amended regulations were those of the Southern Cross Series published by Whitcombe & Tombs, one of a number of firms which had been severely criticised by the Sweating Commission for its exploitation of cheap labour. The Typographical Association attempted to get the firm to provide better conditions of employment but when these were refused the printers went on strike. Meanwhile, the Maritime Council through its district Trades and Labour Councils tried to organise a boycott of Whitcombe & Tombs' goods, a boycott that coincided with the Board's decision to require the use of Southern Cross Readers in all Otago schools.

Pressure on the Board soon ensued. In the same month in which the textbooks regulations were amended, the Dunedin Conference resolved to wait upon the Board and request that either the regulations be suspended until the printing dispute was settled or the inspectors be instructed not to examine work from the Southern Cross Readers at the next school examination.<sup>26</sup> Several days later 131 parents petitioned the North East Valley School Committee praying that the Committee use its endeavours to discourage the use of Whitcombe & Tombs books in the school. Moreover, by the time of its regular September meeting, the Board was faced with a further request from 30 householders in Oamaru South that none of the firm's books be used in the schools until the dispute was settled. On the other hand, the Incholme School Committee chose to petition the Board urging it not to give in to the demands of agitators in any way.

Pressure of this kind was novel to the Board, but it decided not to yield its ground. In contrast to the way it had given in to the political strength of the school committees over appointments, the Board saw no reason why its decisions as an educational authority should be forcefully accommodated to the politics of an industrial dispute. Accordingly it concluded: 'This Board, as a public body, charged with the administration of an Act of the Colonial legislature feels bound to

maintain a position of strict neutrality in regard to the matter at issue and sees no necessity in any way to modify its regulations of 1890.’<sup>27</sup> The difficulty was, however, that by taking this stand the Board had in fact ceased to be neutral. A mandatory examination based upon material boycotted by many parents could hardly be depicted as being a neutral action. The Board seems to have recognised this because shortly after it had declared its position of ‘neutrality’ in public, it let it be known that the implementation of the new regulations would be delayed for six months. By this date it was hoped that the dispute would be settled.

But the Board was not destined to be let off as lightly as this from the problem on hand. The dispute dragged on into 1891 and with the election of a new government which was more sympathetic to Labour interests, the Board’s public policy on textbooks was now declared to be hostile by many parents and trade unions. On 5 February 1891, William Hutchison, a local member of parliament, waited on Pryde and stated the protesters’ case. The Secretary replied that there was no compulsion to use the books in dispute and that no teacher at that point in time was at liberty to insist upon their use in the classroom. Hutchison and his supporters, however, regarded this rejoinder as being contrary to what was in fact occurring in many schools. Two days later, a meeting of the Otago Trades and Labour Council, with David Pinkerton the new labour member of parliament in the chair, resolved:

1. The Council protests at the arbitrary manner in which Whitcomb & Tombs books are sought to be enforced in our public schools.
2. School committees, education boards, other trades and labour councils and the Minister of Education should be written to on the subject.
3. The unions be written to drawing attention to the fact that elections of school committees will soon take place, and that they be requested to take such steps as will ensure the election of working men.
4. The Minister of Education be asked to take into consideration the desirability of the government publishing a uniform set of school books for the whole colony, the preparation and work of the same to be done in the colony.<sup>28</sup>

Cohen followed up the publicity given to these resolutions by writing a long letter to the press in which he traced the origin of the present difficulty and lent his support to the proposal to produce a national series of textbooks, a proposal which Stout and he had mooted many

years before.<sup>29</sup> By this date, therefore, it had become clear that political pressure was once more being mounted against the Board.

Furthermore, at the February meeting of the Trades and Labour Council, William Earnshaw, another newly-elected labour representative in parliament, reported that he had received a telegram from Habens stating that the Minister of Education had opened correspondence with the Otago Education Board concerning the use of Whitcombe & Tombs textbooks in the public schools. This was indeed the case and if ever the Board was to learn that it could not conduct education affairs in isolation from general politics in the community, now was the moment of truth. Habens' letter, which was read to the Board at its meeting on 19 February 1891, was bluntly to the point. The Inspector-General wrote: 'I have the honour by direction to inform you that the Minister of Education has heard that your Board is compelling pupils to use Messrs. Whiteombe & Tombs Readers against the wishes of many parents. I am instructed to ask you to be so good as to furnish the Minister with a statement of the Board's reason for adopting this course.'<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the departmental directive, the Board was presented with a letter from Whitcombe & Tombs inviting Board members to conduct their own inquiry into the working conditions in the firm's printshop, a deputation from the Dunedin Conference led by Cohen claiming that 200 parents were about to remove their children from city and suburban schools because of the school books controversy, and a deputation from the Macandrew Road School Committee headed by Earnshaw, which claimed that the Southern Cross Readers were unacceptable on educational as well as industrial grounds. There was also a letter from the Union Street School Committee stating its belief that the Board had no legal right to enforce the use of stipulated textbooks in the schools.

The Board dealt swiftly with the objection raised by the Union Street Committee by referring it to clause 84 of the Education Act.<sup>31</sup> Hislop further pointed out to the several deputations that there was no substance to the charges that children were being forced to purchase boycotted books because the Board had temporarily suspended its new regulations. As there seemed to be some doubt as to whether all schools recognised this however, the Board there and then decided to issue new regulations which allowed headteachers a choice in the selection of supplementary readers. The new regulations<sup>32</sup> which were issued the following day, allowed in fact for all that the protesting groups had

asked, but the Board was much less flexible in its attitude towards the directive from Reeves. Most members took considerable umbrage at the Minister's magisterial stance and they were appalled that Reeves appeared to have been willing to take the accusations of the unions at their face value. The kindest comment passed was that perhaps it was the juvenility of the new Minister that had been responsible for his letter to the Board. On Hislop's motion it was decided: 'That the Secretary be instructed to state in reply that the Minister of Education has been misinformed as to the action of the Board with regard to the reading books, and that therefore the Board has no explanation to offer.'<sup>33</sup> It was a most unfortunate beginning to the Board's relationship with Reeves who at the time had been in office for less than a month.

Having attained their immediate objective, the unions now withdrew as an organized group from the 'schoolbooks' issue although periodic complaints continued to be made by union spokesmen. In April 1891, for example, on the eve of the annual school committee elections, the Secretary of the Otago Trades and Labour Council claimed that there were some schools in which children had been caned for failing to purchase Whitcomb & Tombs books. He suggested that since the working classes constituted by far the majority of the householders, they could if they wished make their voice felt on the committees about to be elected. When the elections took place however, there was absolutely no evidence of a 'working class invasion' of the polls.<sup>34</sup> There the matter might have rested had it not been for the fact that Reeves determined not to let the general issue of 'schoolbooks' disappear and commenced instead to show how public sentiment expressed through community pressure groups might be converted into positive educational action.

Reeves had long believed that the work in New Zealand schools should be based first and foremost upon the colonial environment within which the schools were set. Accordingly, the concept of specially designed national readers which had been publicised by the Otago Trades and Labour Council was one that he found appealing. With this in mind, Reeves proceeded to circularize the Council's resolutions to all education boards asking for their general comments on the resolutions, and particularly for their opinions on the request to have government printed national readers. Describing the resolutions as an 'important movement of the public mind', the Minister sought to test the reaction of the boards to the new phenomenon of unions entering into educational politics.

Although several of the authorities remained indifferent, most boards expressed guarded support for the idea of national readers. Almost with one voice however, they were firmly opposed to unions interfering with the framework of educational decision making that had been established under the 1877 Act. The Westland Education Board regarded 'with disfavour any ill-advised and vicious interference on the part of any self-constituted organisation with the present system of education ... [considering that] parliament alone is the proper arbiter for dealing with abuses if any exist'.<sup>35</sup> The Nelson Board summed up its uneasiness when it wrote: This Board cannot recognise that the Trades and Labour Council is the proper body to advise education boards as to the selection of school books, a matter to which the Nelson Board has hitherto devoted much attention.<sup>36</sup> The Otago Board had no comment to offer while the Auckland Board members convinced themselves that Reeves was simply playing politics.

Nevertheless, Reeves was not disheartened either by the replies he received or by the fact that the NZEI was still firmly opposed to the introduction of national readers. In July 1891, he announced in parliament that he intended doing what he could to produce a national school reader or series of readers although he was aware of the difficulty of persuading the boards to accept the notion of uniform national texts.<sup>37</sup> In May 1892, the Minister followed the point up when he transmitted a series of questions to the boards for their comment. Among other matters, the Otago Board was asked if it considered it desirable that a uniform set of books should be provided for use in all schools in the colony.

Being no longer under the continuing strain of having to defend itself from agitation by unions and parents, the Board now warmed to the fact that Reeves had seen fit to ask it to give a responsible opinion. In a reply drafted by Hislop, the Board stated that it had long come to the conclusion that a uniform set of textbooks was necessary within a board district. The Board foresaw difficulties in getting all boards to agree to use the same set of texts but it thought that a realistic compromise might be afforded through groups of boards [e.g. Otago and Southland] agreeing upon uniform texts for their combined areas. In his circular, Reeves carefully avoided specific reference to government printed readers but the Board itself broached the question by concluding: 'If, however, the Education Department should cause to be prepared a series of class books specially adapted to the circumstances and wants of the public schools of New Zealand the difficulties herein referred to

[i.e. getting boards to agree on common texts] would probably not be experienced to the same extent.’<sup>38</sup>

This was indeed a considerable shift in the opinion of a body which only four years earlier had seen no value in the concept of national texts and which had imposed uniform texts on its own schools with some reluctance. The evidence suggests, however, that the change which had taken place in the Board’s thinking was a reflection of changing views in the wider community. The *Otago Daily Times* which had long been suspicious of ‘incipient socialism’ lurking in proposals for national readers,<sup>39</sup> was not altogether satisfied with the Board’s conversion to Reeves’ thinking in 1892.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, increasing numbers of school committees in the province not only expressed themselves in favour of national textbooks but also wanted them issued free of charge to all children.

In the climate of opinion thus created, Reeves was able to proceed with the publication of the first New Zealand School Reader in 1895. The Reader was not in fact a very successful book, but its publication was significant.<sup>41</sup> This was because it represented the pioneering endeavour of what was later to become the School Publications Branch of the Department of Education. Thus it came about that an important section of New Zealand’s educational services was born out of union agitation concerning the revelations of the Sweating Commission, a peculiarly ill-timed decision on textbooks by the Otago Board, and the manoeuvrings of a Minister who was a master of political craft. In all of this, the Board had at first played an unwitting part. But with Reeves’ assistance it was later able to demonstrate in other matters, a more positive grasp of the changes which were taking place in New Zealand society and from which the schools could not remain impervious.

The Board’s inspectors were quicker than the Board to sense that the community’s conscience had been aroused by the Sweating Commission’s disclosures that the practice of child employment was widespread in the nation’s industries. In their report for 1890, the inspectors took the unusual step of evaluating the worth of work completed in standard four as a minimal requirement for children before they entered employment. Their unqualified conclusion was that even if the compulsory clauses were effectively enforced, ‘more’ could be done to help children who are passing out into the working world at this early stage’.<sup>42</sup> But the more immediate problem was that in Otago, as in other districts, the compulsory clauses of the Act remained virtually a

dead letter, especially in the towns where criticisms of 'urchins roaming the streets' became ever more frequent.

Reeves' *Factory Acts* of 1891 and 1892, which forbade the employment of boys under thirteen and girls under fourteen in any factory [a factory being defined as an enterprise engaging more than three employees], were an immediate answer to the abuses which had been revealed by the Sweating Commission. Nevertheless, the new legislation, which satisfied the agitation that unions had mounted against child employment, did not have any quick and dramatic effect upon the size of the school population in Otago. Indeed, if popular account is to be believed, many of the children who were now debarred by age from employment, whiled away their time in idleness. What the Factory Acts did do, however, was to make it more feasible for authority to exert some control over errant scholars. More importantly, the very existence of legal sanctions against the employment of child labour strengthened the view that the proper place for all children was the school.

During the worst years of retrenchment it was understandable that the government had shown little interest in enrolling more children in the schools. The Otago Board too, with the best board attendance per capita enrolment, had not felt the need to press the matter of the compulsory clauses unduly. But in 1890, when the Board first became genuinely perturbed at the decline which had occurred in school attendance in the province, it reported that because there was no regular system for enforcing the compulsory clauses of the Act there was also no way of knowing how many children were growing up in the district without the benefits of an elementary education.<sup>43</sup> In that same year, in a paper read to the Dunedin Conference, Cohen again referred to the success of the Auckland Board's appointment of a truant officer and the establishment of a special truant school. As he had done earlier, Cohen urged the Board to follow the same course.

If for no other reason, the prospect of financial gain from the work of an efficient truant officer could not have seemed unattractive to a Board that was hard-pressed for income. In July 1891, judging that the climate of opinion was suitable for it to take action, Pryde let it be known that a deputation on the matter from the Dunedin Conference would be welcomed by the Board.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, after the deputation had stated its case in August, a special committee of the Board was appointed to consider the possibility of appointing a truant officer and establishing a truant school.<sup>45</sup> Following communication with other boards to discover how they dealt with the problem of truancy in their schools,<sup>46</sup> the

committee decided that arguments which had earlier been aired in the community against the formation of a special truant school were still valid. It recommended against such a venture. As the result of its investigations however, the committee was convinced that the services of a truant officer were urgently required and it reported thus to the Board. The Board was anxious to procure the services of a person as cheaply as possible and in March 1892 appointed R. Aitken as part-time truant officer for a trial period of six months. Aitken, who was already employed as an Inspector for the SPCA, was therefore charged with the additional task of picking up stray children around the city as well as lost cats and dogs.

Aitken's appointment was later confirmed and generally the Board was well pleased with his efforts to clear children from the streets and wharves during school hours. But policing by the truant officer could do little to overcome the unwieldy nature of the compulsory clauses themselves. Aitken had to wait until the quarterly attendance returns were completed before he could hope to gain court convictions of offending parents. Moreover, by law he had no right to serve summonses on any parents unless he was especially empowered by individual school committees so to do. The Board had long maintained that no successful resolution of the problem was possible until the responsibility for enforcing attendance was passed by law from the school committees to the boards. It again informed Reeves of this view when the Minister asked the Board for its views on the compulsory clauses in June 1892.<sup>47</sup> The point was reiterated in the Board's reports for 1892 and 1893, but Reeves, who was also under strong pressure from the NZEI to take action on the truancy problem, did not think that parliament would tolerate a change of this magnitude in the Education Act.

Nevertheless, in 1894 the Minister finally persuaded parliament to pass a *School Attendance Act* which, by stipulating minimum weekly rather than quarterly attendances, strengthened the hand of the prosecuting authorities. By the end of that year Otago's truant officer had devised a reasonably efficient *modus operandi*. Each month, the headmasters of the city schools furnished him with a list of the pupils who had failed to make the requisite number of attendances. After the lists had been checked over with the headmasters concerned, the names of all pupils known to be sick or deemed to be minor delinquents were deleted. Aitken then interviewed the parents of the children whose



names remained and a small proportion of these, often parents whose children were habitual offenders, were summonsed for prosecution.

By 1894, most commentators were agreed that under the circumstances the appointment of a truant officer had worked out reasonably well. The limitations were obvious. The officer's policing did not extend much beyond Dunedin and it was easier for him to detect irregular attendance than it was to check upon children who were not enrolled at any school. It was also true that the employment of a truant officer produced no immediate rise in the attendance figures and therefore no increase in the Board's income. Nevertheless, the tightened attention given to compulsory schooling signified that in Otago, as elsewhere, the full intention of the framers of the 1877 Act was at last coming to be realized.

The long-term objective of Bowen and others had not been simply to provide a state service for those who wished to avail themselves of schooling. Rather it had been to ensure that the experience of formal education would be binding upon all children irrespective of parental wishes. Now, with more emphasis being placed upon compulsory attendance, the consciences of many who had been shocked by instances of social degradation revealed by an official inquiry and by some of the home circumstances described in the truant officer's reports, were eased. At the very least, it seemed, there was a greater chance from this date that schooling would be able to compensate for parental ignorance and for inadequate environments. To those who dreamed greater thoughts however, the nearer attainment of the goal of universal education brought with it visions of personal benefit being bestowed upon each and every individual through the provision of a generous schooling. The cost of the ideal to individual freedom was the vision of the truant officer stalking his prey on the wharves of Dunedin. But its generosity was well summed up by the Board's chairman, John MacGregor, who at the capping ceremony of the University of Otago in 1891, provided an astonishing forecast of Peter Fraser's famous statement made nearly fifty years later, when he said: '... all I claim is that it is the right of everyone, and it is in the interests of society that everyone - no matter in what rank he is born - shall be furnished with the means for the full development of his powers....'<sup>48</sup>

The growing enforcement of school attendance also provoked renewed questioning of the content of contemporary schooling in relation to the ideals which MacGregor and others proclaimed. Thoughtful opinion was increasingly sympathetic to the long-standing

complaint by Stout and other liberals that the schools concentrated too much on the turning out of clerks and not enough upon producing people who could become skilled artisans. The unions preferred to concentrate their demands upon the removal of financial barriers to further education, but prominent labour spokesmen were among those who believed that with the growth of an industrial society, young men with technical training would soon be in the van of progress.<sup>49</sup> Innovations in British education which wore consequent upon the report of the *Samuelson Commission on Technical Instruction* in 1884, were the subject of considerable comment. Local interest was further heightened in 1888, when A.D. Riley, the head of the School of Design in Wellington produced an outstanding and comprehensive report to parliament on *Technical and Art Instruction and Drawing in Primary Schools*.<sup>50</sup> The result was that by 1890 there was considerable support being expressed in Otago, as elsewhere, for the view that the primary school syllabus should be modified to provide for a more practical orientation in the work required.

Unfortunately, Stout's interpretation of the Samuelson Report had led him when he was Minister of Education in 1885, to introduce compulsory geometrical drawing into the primary school curriculum. This requirement, which was retained in subsequent syllabus amendments, proved to be nothing short of an educational disaster. Not only did the drawing syllabus reveal little of the liberal view of technical education held by people like T.H. Huxley, but its esoteric requirements, to say nothing of its prolix prescriptions, also severely frightened both inspectors and teachers. A negative attitude on their part towards anything to do with 'technical training' was created, and this had a blunting effect upon the interest shown in the subject by the Department and the boards after 1890.

Nevertheless, by 1890 the Otago Board had already begun in a small way to foster two distinct activities which Musgrave distinguished as having been subsumed under the general title of 'Technical Education' in the nineteenth century context.<sup>51</sup> As early as 1885, the Board began to provide a little financial support for school committees that wished to establish classes in carpentry and practical agriculture. In the same year, James Reid, the far sighted Rector of the Tokomairiro District High School, acting on the suggestion of the local Board member, Henry Clark, asked the Board for a grant of £25 in order to purchase the equipment necessary to run classes in agriculture and carpentry. The Board granted the request<sup>52</sup> and also provided support for the Union

Street School Committee when in 1890 it established cooking classes for the senior girls.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the Board permitted the George Street School Committee to allow its caretaker to teach woodwork to boys at the school outside regular school hours. The instructor was authorised to charge a small fee for his services but the Board stipulated that deserving pupils who could not afford the fee must be admitted to the class free of charge. The Board had no regular policy in relation to these developments which were given little publicity.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, these humble beginnings of what soon came to be described as 'manual instruction' [as opposed to other kinds of technical education], were destined to bear a far greater fruit than the sterile diet of 'Drawing' inflicted on all teachers and pupils in the standards classes.

In 1887, the *New Zealand Schoolmaster* drew attention to the conflicting notions often subsumed under the general rubric of 'Technical Education'. The *Schoolmaster* pointed out that two distinct activities were commonly embraced by that term. On the one hand there were activities involving elementary instruction in the use of tools. These could be provided for in the course work of the ordinary schools and were described as 'manual instruction'. On the other hand there were activities that lent themselves more to trade training ['technical instruction'] and these, it was argued, were best catered for outside the environs of the elementary school.<sup>55</sup> It was to meet the latter need that the *Dunedin Technical Classes Association* was established in 1888. With support from the Board by way of free use of the Normal School classrooms, the Association, under the aegis of its energetic secretary, G.M. Thompson, was soon running a variety of evening classes for paying clients. The classes catered for cultural interests as well as for those persons who wished to learn trade skills. Indeed, apart from instruction in commercial arithmetic and bookkeeping, there was a dearth of advanced vocational training provided because the Association lacked the necessary equipment and instructors. Nevertheless, the Association received strong support in 1890 from the city's newly elected labour representatives, one of whom served as an instructor in engineering lathe work. Moreover, Reeves was sufficiently impressed with the work of the Association in 1892, that he provided it with a grant of public money to enable it to extend its facilities.

Thompson was well aware, however, that many students were lost to the Association's classes because the level of vocational training which they provided was too advanced for those who had left school at standard four or lower. He believed that this fact clearly indicated that

there was a need to develop Continuation Schools on the German model. But Thompson also made it plain to all that the Association would do nothing that could be construed as an attempt to teach the same work as that provided in the standards curriculum for the primary schools. There was to be no conflict of interest between the Board and its teachers and the classes of the Association.<sup>56</sup> This agreement, whatever its disadvantages for those persons who were thereby shut out from opportunities for further education, left the Board in a very good position to support the case for more government provision for manual and technical instruction. It could endorse the growing public demand for more 'manual instruction' in the schools,<sup>57</sup> while at the same time it could also support the general case for 'technical instruction' without in any way feeling that it was compromising its own interests by so doing.<sup>58</sup>

Accordingly, the Board felt able to comment with warmth on the draft of a *Manual & Technical Instruction Bill* which Reeves submitted to the boards for their consideration in April 1892. The Bill separated 'manual' from 'technical' instruction in the manner in which the two had already been divided in Otago, although in the draft 'technical instruction' was specifically defined to exclude direct trade training and to include 'the principles of science and art applicable to industries'. This definition had some obvious and serious implications for the future work of the Technical Classes Association. But as a tentative measure to provide grants for classes in manual and technical subjects, the Board believed that the Bill was sufficient. Furthermore, as a reflection of how far it had moved from its initial suspicion of Reeves and from its provincial isolationism of earlier years, the Board added that it would be glad to co-operate with the Minister in giving effect to the provisions of the Bill and would place the services of its inspectors at his disposal if such should be required by him.<sup>59</sup>

In this instance, the Board did not, as it had first done in the case of the textbooks controversy, fail at any stage to see how it might work positively with the Minister to bring about desired change. As it so happened, however, the Board's supportive attitude towards the technical education proposals was not shared by many of the other district education authorities, with the result that Reeves' Bill was not finally passed until 1895. Nevertheless, the Board gained considerably from the consultations which had taken place. Of prime importance was the fact that the confidence built up between itself and the Minister by 1892 was to stand it in good stead as it faced up to other reforms that

were to have a more immediate outcome than Reeves' Technical Education Bill.

MacGregor's credo that the schools should provide 'the means for the full development of each individual's powers'<sup>60</sup> was publicised at a time when there was a growing belief that in higher education especially, 'working men's sons do not have the opportunity to as good an education as those who can pay for it'.<sup>61</sup> This was a powerful political sentiment and although there was a limit to what it could do to facilitate access to secondary schooling, the Board decided in 1890 that the time was opportune for it to review its existing scholarship regulations. A Board committee set up to go into the matter soon discovered that complaints that it was much harder for children in rural schools to win Board scholarships were true. Thereupon the committee suggested equalising the examination opportunities of town and country candidates by allocating a set proportion of the scholarships to be competed for only by pupils in small country schools.<sup>62</sup> The Board was in agreement with the committee's proposal to treat one group of pupils differently from another in the interests of overall 'equality', but the Department ruled that this would be contrary to the intention of the Education Act. However, it accepted an alternative proposition to allow for an age differential between town and country candidates, and the Board's scholarship regulations were amended accordingly.

Liberal opinion on the Board was under no illusion that the scholarship system was anything but a makeshift until higher education was open to all regardless of their individual means. Nevertheless, it was hoped that the new regulations in 1890 would make for some improvement and remove a sense of injustice felt by parents living in more isolated districts. In addition, the Board tried to do something to meet the growing demand that more scholarships should be available in general. After promptings from MacGregor in 1894, it was decided once again to amend the regulations to allow for an increase in the number of scholarships by reducing the monetary value of each individual scholarship awarded. To encourage the pursuit of more utilitarian forms of secondary education, the new regulations also allowed for senior scholarship holders to take up their education at Lincoln College.<sup>63</sup> The Board could argue, therefore, that it had done what it could within the limits of its statutory powers to facilitate access to further education. Moreover, a paper published by the Board in 1890, clearly revealed that whatever its weaknesses had been over the years, the scholarship system in Otago had had the effect of allowing some children from isolated

areas and/or humble backgrounds to maximise their educational opportunities.

In point of fact, it was much easier for the Board to attempt to do something about access to advanced education than it was for members to enter into debate about the relevance of the content of post-primary schooling. Given the finance, it was a relatively straightforward task to identify and satisfy a demand for secondary school places. But it was far more difficult to cope with conflicting expectations about advanced schooling, especially so for an authority that was only marginally connected with post-primary education through its district high schools. The Board's inspectors had long been unenthusiastic about the narrow academic emphasis which most of these schools had continued to place upon traditional academic work in their senior classes. Nevertheless, as long as the district high schools succeeded in satisfying the expectations of rural parents for 'equality of opportunity', and as long as some children continued to gain qualifications like Matriculation and Civil Service Entrance, the Board and its officers were disinclined to make a serious issue of the matter.

Thus although they were interested to note the introduction of classes in commercial practice and other 'modern' subjects at the Tokomairiro District High School, the inspectors had little of general worth to say when they compiled a special report on the district high schools in 1890.<sup>64</sup> During that year, however, the Board received evidence that some parents were not happy with the emphasis given to conventional academic fare in these schools. In March 1890, the Palmerston District High School Committee petitioned the Board to persuade the Rector of the school to form 'classes in Higher English, Higher Arithmetic and Chemistry at which instruction shall be of a practical Nature'.<sup>65</sup> The Board thought that the request was reasonable, but evidently the Rector, W. Porteous, thought otherwise. In the following year, the Committee wrote again to the Board: 'The Committee regrets that so little attention has been paid to the special subjects suggested by them and recommended by the Board. The committee is of opinion that in a country school a broader view of higher education should be taken, instead of running in the old lines of preparing pupils for civil service and Normal School examinations.'<sup>66</sup>

Petrie, who was now consulted further on the matter, considered that the Committee's demands were 'somewhat out of place for a quasi-high school practically taught by a single teacher'. Although he conceded that the district high schools generally paid too much attention to abstract

mathematics, the inspector's major point was that in a small senior class, the parents could not realistically expect a teacher to prepare pupils for competitive examinations *and* provide instruction in 'practical' subjects'. This was also the attitude taken by the Board. Rightly or wrongly, it sensed that parents in the country districts would not want to see curriculum changes being initiated at the expense of fewer examination passes. Nor was the Board able to provide the district high schools with more generous staffing schedules which might have been one way out of the difficulty.

In view of what was happening in the senior classes in the city schools, the Board could have no assurance that the majority of parents were ready to think beyond their desire for access to secondary education. By 1891, the number of standard seven pupils had grown to such an extent that there were 259 in the Dunedin city and suburban schools alone.<sup>67</sup> The largest single class was that of 42 pupils at the High Street School but two other schools had standard seven classes of 30 pupils or more.<sup>68</sup> In one respect standard seven classes were an easier problem for the Board to deal with than in earlier years because the Ballance Government gave full support to their establishment. Reeves put the matter beyond doubt in 1892 when in answer to a question asked by Fisher in the House of Representatives, he stated that he did not believe that standard seven classes violated the spirit of the Education Act and that the government intended to continue to provide education for children who had passed standard six.<sup>69</sup> The Board was clearly delighted with the Minister's declaration. When in the following month it was faced with the case of a country teacher who refused to teach standard seven work, it felt sufficiently confident to rule that in future no teacher could refuse to provide instruction for pupils in that class. Hislop hoped that this would settle the matter once and for all.<sup>70</sup>

The content of standard seven work, which was governed very much by the purposes of pupils enrolling in these classes, was still highly debateable however. Despite the illegality of its enterprise, the reputation of the Normal School as a centre which provided well organised and free secondary instruction in preparation for public examinations, continued to grow. By 1892, in fact, other primary schools in the city complained that it was attracting potential pupils from their own standard seven classes. As a result, the Board declined to enrol any more pupils in standard seven class at the Normal School who had completed their primary education at schools elsewhere. Such was the strength of parental demand however, that the sole effect of this

decision was to swell the numbers of children enrolled at the Normal School in standards five or six.<sup>71</sup>

While the desire to win examination qualifications was the most obvious, other reasons were also advanced to account for the increasing standard seven rolls. The inspectors conceded that some of the pupils intended going on 'to a higher educational institution',<sup>72</sup> and this may well have been an oblique way of saying that they were preparing for entrance exams to the university or the training college, or possibly for scholarship entry to the high schools. On the other hand, the tight labour market of the day accentuated the emphasis that was placed upon formal qualifications and thereby raised the vocational value of standard seven attendance. Specific decisions of the Board reflected this change. In 1892 it authorised the inspectors to examine adult candidates for the standard six certificate who needed this qualification for employment purposes.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, in that same year it agreed to a request from the Chief Postmaster in Dunedin to examine pupils from Catholic schools for the standard six qualification.<sup>74</sup> Alternatively some children probably entered standard seven simply because they were too young to leave school. Reeves' factory legislation contributed to keeping such pupils off the labour market.

Whatever the mixture of motives for attendance might have been, it was clear that the other city primary schools tended in their standard seven work to follow the model which was set by the Normal School. In 1892, the practice of primary teachers in Dunedin schools giving instruction in 'secondary' subjects was brought to light in what came to be known as the 'Cotton Case'. A Mrs Cotton who conducted a private secondary school in the city, wrote to the Board protesting against what she claimed was the widespread practice in primary schools of teachers taking pupils for secondary subjects after regular school hours.<sup>75</sup> She charged that boys from very junior classes were being given free instruction in subjects such as Latin, instruction for which secondary pupils had to pay. Mrs Cotton did not raise the question of standard seven directly, but the Board was clearly embarrassed with the publicised claim that its servants were infringing forbidden territory.

Pryde claimed that those classes which were conducted after school hours took fee-paying pupils only, but the Secretary produced no firm documentation to support his assertion. Nevertheless, the Board decided that it had no right to interfere with the actions of its teachers in their own time. It refused to sustain Mrs Cotton's complaint,<sup>76</sup> one member even arguing that the high schools had no right to criticise competition



when for years they had been enrolling children who by virtue of age and ability should have been sent first to the primary schools. For obvious reasons, however, the Board had long sought to avoid the charge that it condoned competition with the high schools. In its official pronouncements upon standard seven work it carefully evaded any suggestions of encroachment. In October 1890, Pryde explained to the Department that in the standard seven classes: 'The teachers select their own subjects and on examination day present a list of them together with the quantity of work done in each. Inspectors examine the work and express in general terms their judgment of the quality of the answering. They do not record the individual passes.'<sup>77</sup>

Such a procedure was suitably vague, allowing everything from the advanced teaching at the Normal School to useful work for single senior pupils in small rural schools.<sup>78</sup> But the inspectors were more frank. In their report in 1890, after pronouncing much of the work in standard seven to be unduly academic and of limited value to many pupils, they advocated the introduction of more practically oriented courses with an emphasis upon science for boys and domestic economy for girls.<sup>79</sup> The Board took no action until 1892, when the combined effect of the Normal School's influence upon enrolments in the city schools and the debate surrounding the 'Cotton Case', brought the subject of standard seven work to the fore. In October of that year, a committee under the chairmanship of John MacGregor, was asked to investigate 'the subject of teaching beyond standard six in Otago schools'. The committee achieved nothing of immediate worth, but the influence of its investigations upon MacGregor's thinking was profound.

MacGregor became convinced that the Board had been mistaken in its attempt to discourage city parents from using the senior class at the Normal School as a focal point for advanced work in standard seven. In his view, the parents were showing the Board by their actions that there was a need for a new form of secondary schooling. Building upon this supposition, MacGregor placed before the Board in February 1894, a proposal to amalgamate all the standard seven classes in the city into one central school.<sup>80</sup> MacGregor generously attributed the idea to Mark Cohen and a Mr Gill, but he himself prosecuted the concept of a 'central school' with considerable ability and enthusiasm. MacGregor argued that a central school would implement the earlier recommendations of the inspectors on standard seven work because it would teach vocationally-oriented subjects to senior pupils who did not wish to advance to conventional high schools. Through the efficient

consolidation of teaching power and equipment, a central, school would be ideally suited to provide forms of 'technical instruction' envisaged in Reeves' Bill in 1892, while there would be no conflict with fee paying high schools because conventional secondary school subjects would not be taught. MacGregor also believed that such a school would provide a healthy antidote to the conventional primary school syllabus which 'simply crams children with a lot of information that is of dubious practical value'.<sup>81</sup>

A committee was established to investigate the matter further and it was obvious that MacGregor's arguments had stirred considerable interest in the wider community. A number of school committees [although by no means all] endorsed the general principle of a central school being established, while J. J. Ramsay, a country member of the Board, declared that if the proposal were successfully implemented, he would move that the Board also revise the curricula of the district high schools.<sup>82</sup> Within a short time, however, two major objections to the concept of a central school were expressed. A legal opinion gained from Stout declared that the Board had no authority under the Act to establish the kind of school which MacGregor envisaged.<sup>83</sup> It was true that the Board was empowered to establish a district high school in the city if the Department were willing. But this would have entailed the inclusion of junior classes in the school, something that the concept of a central school was designed to delete.

More important however, was the objection which was raised to MacGregor's open admission that the school would not provide conventional academic fare. His arguments on the point were quickly twisted to imply that what he was proposing was in essence a second grade education for the masses. And there was the familiar rub. Whatever the strength of the arguments for 'practical' education, it was obvious that many parents in the city wanted access for their children to an education that was rendered 'legitimate' by formal examinations. This reaction paralleled that which the Board had encountered when it had tentatively considered reforming curricula in the district high schools. MacGregor now found, as George Hogben would later, that in the relatively unfamiliar world of secondary education, popular opinion was sensitive first and foremost to the idea of exclusion. Serious debate concerning the content of conventional post-primary courses, developed much more slowly. The *Otago Daily Times* summed up this sentiment when it wrote scathingly of ideas to establish 'Gradgrind' schools and concluded by saying, 'The democratic man, if he does not already know

fully, at least knows in part, that the best is the only education worth fighting for'.<sup>84</sup> Needless to say, the *Times* identified 'the best' as the traditional academic content associated with the concept of liberal education, an education unsullied by 'practical' concerns.

The Board was able to leave unanswered the ideological issues which MacGregor's proposals had raised. This was because it was compelled by the force of Stout's legal argument to conclude that it had no authority to clarify the ambiguity which had developed around the prosecution of standard seven classes. A similar situation resulted with respect to kindergarten work which MacGregor and others felt was as urgently required as technical instruction, if the public schools were to provide a generous education for all. Since its inception in Otago in 1888, the kindergarten movement had believed strongly in the power of 'scientific' educational methods to bring about the moral regeneration of children possessing inadequate family environments. Following the disclosures of the Sweating Commission, the conscience of the community was disturbed by comments that: 'The working men's nurseries are, in bad weather, the kitchen where our wives have room for the babies and the washing and the cooking: and in good weather, the empty section or sidewalk and gutter, the children contracting all manner of evil habits that will stick to them through life'.<sup>85</sup> But the kindergarteners promised the way to alleviation. According to one enthusiast who cast the role of the kindergarten near to that of God: 'The larrikin is dead, the waif is born again. The Kindergarten has done this, but it is more than a mere seminary - it is a missionary college. Each child as it daily leaves the kindergarten enters its home a little missionary, carrying the gospel of cleanliness, order, submission, veneration, altruism'.<sup>86</sup>

Such hyperbole was not of course to be expected from the Board's inspectors, although they continued to advocate the use of kindergarten methods in the infant classes of the primary schools. There was no real evidence by 1890, however, that the infant work in Otago's schools had undergone any substantial improvement from the days when it had been so devastatingly criticised by Brown. The Board still allowed the use of monitors in the smaller schools<sup>87</sup> and the inspectors continued to complain that teachers were guilty of inflating the rolls of the infant rooms in order to preserve the rate of examination passes in the standards classes. In 1893, the Board noted laconically, 'Dullness and excuses of like import are ... reasons commonly assigned for failing to present children over eight years for Standard one'.<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kindergarten Association, with something approaching the Messianic fervour of a militant religious sect, had gone ahead and established its own schools for children under five years of age. By 1892, however, it was plagued with financial difficulties and approached the Board for assistance. The Association Secretary, Miss Kelsey, asked the Board to duplicate what she claimed was the practice in Wellington whereby a capitation allowance was paid for each kindergarten child.<sup>89</sup> The Board thereupon investigated the Wellington practice very thoroughly, being particularly concerned to find out what control that Board exercised over the kindergartens it supported, and what money, if any, it received from the government for children in attendance under five years of age.<sup>90</sup> When it was discovered that one Wellington kindergarten which received support was in fact a regular Board school, Pryde wrote back to Miss Kelsey informing her that the Board had decided after full consideration of the matter that it was not within its powers to vote any money for the maintenance of her schools. The application was therefore declined.<sup>91</sup>

Legally, the Board's position was the correct one to take.. The fact was that, as with technical education, those reformers who desired to make major additions to existing school provision, had to wait upon events that were beyond the specified control of the Board. On the other hand, the Board could have followed its Wellington counterpart in supplying more money for infant work to a selected school or schools. Instead, the Board hoped that the quality of infant work in general would gradually be raised by changes which were occurring in examining procedures of the standards classes, changes, moreover, which the Board was able to influence.

On matters which came more directly within its statutory authority, the Board was able to play an increasingly significant part in promoting improvements in the classrooms. This was especially the case after the Board members had overcome their initial suspicion of Reeves. Things did not begin well when, in 1890 and the early months of 1891, the Board felt its status to be threatened first by the school committees over appointments, and second by the Department over textbook regulations. At this point in time, the Board was in no mood to build upon the outward-looking reformist spirit which it had been developing prior to the election of the Ballance Government. After Reeves had made it clear, however, that he was determined to take the boards into his confidence in educational matters, opinion on the Otago Board underwent a decided change. Hislop summed this up when he stated in public that Reeves'

attitude towards educational affairs was admirable and that despite the initial difficulties which had occurred between the Board and the Minister, it was now clearly apparent that the Education Portfolio was in good hands.<sup>92</sup>

Nor was this confidence misplaced. In March 1891, Reeves, in accordance with his promise to consult the boards fully over possible reforms, transmitted to all boards a critical article on the education system which had been published by the *Auckland Herald*. The Minister invited each board to comment upon the arguments contained therein.<sup>93</sup> The article, in fact, was not a profound piece of writing, much of it being of a somewhat cheap and sensational nature.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, it contained a concentrated attack upon the standards examination procedures, and the real significance lay in its use by the Minister as a tool to encourage boards to think in national rather than parochial terms.

The Otago Board responded well to the challenge. It was true that it began its reply cautiously by stating, 'The Board being charged simply with the administration of the existing education system does not consider it within its province to suggest any changes in the Education Act ....'<sup>95</sup> It was also the case that the Board's members found it more than a little difficult to make precise comment on many of the sweeping generalisations which the *Herald* article contained. However, after denying that the specific complaints contained in the article had any relevance to Otago's schools [a piece of provincial conceit which was perhaps forgiveable], and after deftly placing responsibility for syllabus changes fairly with the Minister, the Board went on to comment on the problems which in its view were in need of most urgent attention. These included the difficulties created by the imposition of virtually the same syllabus prescriptions on all schools 'however much they differ as regards locality, number of teachers, attendance of pupils and other circumstances';<sup>96</sup> the government's failure to give serious consideration to allowing headmasters to be granted at least some responsibility for examining some of the pupils of their own schools; and the need to promote better training for the teachers in the nation's schools. The Board concluded its analysis by endorsing earlier calls which it had made for a conference to allow full and free discussion among the Minister and Department, NZEI delegates, and inspectors and board representatives. Generally speaking, the Board's resolutions, which were drafted by Hislop, were a fitting tribute to Reeves from one of New Zealand's pioneer educational administrators. Moreover, their spirit

boded well for future relationships between the Board and the central authority.

Such expectations were not disappointed. Later in that same year, at the Minister's invitation, the Board provided lengthy and constructive comment upon the compulsory clauses of the Education Act. It followed this with its active support for Reeves' Technical Education Bill in May 1892, and in contrast to some of the other education boards, it continued to support proposals for a national conference of inspectors. In April 1893, responding to Reeves' criticism that the absence of uniformity in national inspection meant that little credence could be placed on comparisons between district results in school examinations, the Board again resolved: 'That for the purpose of securing greater uniformity in regard to the valuation of the work of the schools throughout the colony and the interpretation of the various details of the standard regulations, the Board is of opinion that it is desirable to hold periodical conferences of all inspectors, with the Inspector-General presiding, and that the Minister of Education be requested in accordance with his promise, to place a sum on the Estimates to cover expenses in connection therewith.'<sup>97</sup>

Such a conference was finally held in February 1894. In the Otago Board's view, the result was not as productive as it had hoped, but it was clear that the act of staging the conference marked a significant step in developing the national system of education beyond the constraints of divided professional authority that had been imposed by the 1877 Act. The consistent support which the Board afforded to the idea of holding the conference was also worthy of note. It was strong evidence that Reeves' invitation to the Board to think in terms of a national perspective had not gone unheeded.

Reeves' policy also encouraged the Board to take measures of its own to improve the quality of education in the schools for which it was immediately responsible. This was especially the case after 1892 when the number of 'liberal' members on the Board increased, and the work begun by Brown and others in earlier years came to greater fruition. By that date it was becoming clear that tighter inspection and limited amendments to the national syllabus were not a sufficient answer to the need for reforms in the classrooms. The Board's inspectors continued to encourage, threaten or cajole the teachers, but increasing doubts were expressed that a teacher could be bullied, scared, or even flattered into progress and change.

As in earlier years, many of the inspectors' criticisms were undoubtedly just, while their suggestions for improvements often seemed to be eminently sensible. They deplored the rote learning and unintelligent teaching practices which they continued to encounter in the schools. They advocated such things as more incidental reading experiences, increased attention to local studies in geography, composition work based upon topics that interested the children, and arithmetic oriented to practical problems. The inspectors also endeavoured to encourage teachers to take a less 'bookish' approach to science, cautioning particularly against the common error of turning object lessons into recitals of information. On this point they advised, 'A full knowledge of the subject treated is no doubt necessary for the teacher, but common sense should guide him in selecting from his stores of knowledge only what is important or likely to benefit and interest his pupils'.<sup>98</sup> But there was still the familiar difficulty. As long as teachers believed themselves to be judged by 'passes', the majority were not prepared to interest their pupils at the cost of omitting items of information which the inspector might deem to be of crucial importance. Accordingly, safety and the system produced a conservatism among teachers against which the criticisms of inspectors could make little impression.

In response to pressure from inspectors and teachers, the national syllabus was again amended in October 1891. This time, however, the reception to the Department's attempt to promote reform through syllabus modification was caustic. Incredibly, Habens chose to add to the requirements for compulsory drawing in spite of criticisms that the subject was already too difficult. It was not the action of a sensitive official and it led to the syllabus being openly condemned as 'the greatest abortion that has ever come forth from the Education Department'.<sup>99</sup> Habens also attempted to overcome objections that in the past the syllabus prescriptions had not been worded with sufficient clarity so that all inspectors and teachers would understand them in the same way. But as a result the instructions in the new syllabus were so complex that the *Otago Daily Times* felt moved to comment that 'any pupil who can read the ... remarks on the Standards so as to make them intelligible to a listener can hardly fail to stand any test to which he may be subjected'.<sup>100</sup> In general, Habens' actions on this occasion thoroughly dispelled any lingering hopes that changes made in the regulations by an official who was isolated from the schools could effectively bring about reforms in the classrooms. On the other hand, the Board's

inspectors were too much the victims of their past experience and role to be fully credible as agents for reform.

Many of the inspectors previous recommendations for improvement were sensible, but the fact remained that their view of a desirable state of affairs was one that was essentially static. It had little in common with the pragmatism expressed by David White who argued in his presidential address to the NZEI in 1890, that 'Our daily work is of the most difficult kind, its methods subject to continual and progressive development and continually suggestive of doubt and inquiry as to the best means of doing the best educational work.'<sup>101</sup> To the inspectors, a philosophy like this was much too indefinite, thereby leaving room for error and for excuses on the part of the lazy. They were satisfied with the principle, if not always with the practice, of moderate change being introduced under the control of 'experts', but when pressed to the point, the inspectors were inclined to agree with the Rector of the Otago Girls' High School that in a free education system there was no way of keeping teachers up to the mark except by inspectorial examinations, comparison of results and the like.<sup>102</sup> They were not therefore, markedly sympathetic with the thinking of those who wished to alter radically the government and the evaluation of work completed in the schools.

Nevertheless, it was clear by 1890 that the public and the teachers were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the 'cramming' practices which appeared to be an inevitable accompaniment of the examination system. Criticism was directed at the practice of school committees publishing the 'pass rates' of their schools and in 1890, the NZEI urged that all publication of percentage pass results be abandoned. A number of committees in Otago agreed to do this because 'the policy was condemned by the teaching profession',<sup>103</sup> but the Board continued to tabulate the pass rates of individual schools in its annual reports. Furthermore, it made no secret of the fact that the schools were classified in terms of efficiency according to the examination results obtained.

In April 1890, the Southland Education Board asked the Otago Board what weight it placed upon examination results in determining the 'efficiency' of its schools. The Board replied that in schools with a staff of three or more teachers a percentage of failures exceeding 20 was considered evidence of inefficient teaching. In schools with a smaller staff a failure of 25 was similarly judged.<sup>104</sup>

Sensing perhaps that these criteria were somewhat draconian, the Board did add by way of qualification that 'In individual cases, inferior



intelligence on the part of the pupils and such exceptional circumstances as recent or frequent changes in teachers and great irregularity of attendance, do of course materially qualify the judgment to be formed from the bare statement of a percentage of failures'.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear that the Board was unlikely to promote reform while it pursued this sort of policy. Teachers who received letters from the Secretary informing them that 'if at the next examination of the school the results do not furnish evidence that your management and teaching have been more successful, the Board will deem it necessary to effect a change in the Teachership',<sup>106</sup> or headmasters whose attention was directed to the fact that 'the percentage of passes ... at your school is lower than that of other schools in Dunedin or the suburbs',<sup>107</sup> were not easily to be persuaded that other things mattered besides examination results.

The Board's position was just tenable as long as there was general confidence that school examinations measured what they were purported to measure but increasingly official comment cast this in doubt. In his annual report for 1891, Reeves echoed Stout's earlier opinion that the character of the examinations was highly subjective, thus making their worth highly dubious. Even the Board's inspectors, in their report for the same year, admitted that the examination results could not be as absolute in their quality as many parents and teachers assumed them to be. After condemning parents who put pressure on teachers to get 'results', the inspectors pointed out that the distinction which separated pass from failing candidates was often small and very much influenced by opinion and luck. They concluded, 'Those who know the real state of the case can have no doubt that many of the pupils of our schools who do not pass have yet received a very fair education - an education quite equal to that gained not so many years ago by the average pupils of the schools of this district'.<sup>108</sup> After reading this argument, MacGregor commented that since the inspectors themselves now believed that an exaggerated importance was being attached to examination results, the time had surely come for the Board to cast the mote from its own eye by ceasing to publish percentage pass results.

The matter was taken further in October 1892 when the Anderson's Bay School Committee petitioned the Board to make a radical change in its school reporting procedure. The Committee believed that a bare statement of passes and failures provided no means for judging a school and 'concentrated the attention of teachers and school committees too

exclusively on the question of passes to the great injury of children and teachers'.<sup>109</sup> Pryde claimed that it was beyond the Board's statutory power to take the remedial action requested. Nevertheless, a committee was set up to investigate ways in which the Board through its instructions to teachers and inspectors might modify the general rules of the Department with respect to reporting results. The committee, consisting of Messrs. Green, Hislop and MacGregor, concluded that the Board's practices in reporting percentage passes were indeed capable of modification. Accordingly, in February 1893, the Board, resolved 'That the practice of publishing percentages in the annual report be discontinued' and 'That the teachers be informed that in estimating the efficiency of schools the Board will attach more importance to inspectors' reports on tone, order, and discipline of the schools than to the percentage of passes of the individual pupils'.<sup>110</sup> When the teachers and committees were informed of these and other resolutions in June 1893,<sup>111</sup> the Anderson's Bay School Committee was one group that believed that the change of heart now exhibited by the Board would go a long way to help break down 'the vicious system of cramming which is one of the greatest blots on our education system'.<sup>112</sup>

At the same time the Board also dealt with the long-standing abuse of keeping children in after school for extra work as the day of the inspector's examination drew near. In February 1893, it was resolved that the teachers be informed that the Board disapproved of the practice and 'that the inspectors be requested to discourage special preparations for annual examinations in every possible way and report to the Board whether the Board's instructions on this point are duly attended to'.<sup>113</sup> This did not, in fact, guarantee that the practice of 'keeping in' would cease, but it marked a considerable step forward from the days when Pryde was in the habit of writing to protesting school committees informing them that there was no note on the subject of 'school hours': 'The teachers of course are the best judges of what hours suit and usually the matter is left to them.'<sup>114</sup> By thus declaring its position, the Board now acted in response to community opinion that was no longer tolerant of the practice of keeping children at school from 9.30 a.m. until 5.00 p.m.<sup>115</sup>

The same was true of the matter of excessive home lessons. In 1890 Pryde felt justified in claiming that 'Up to the present the Board has left this matter entirely to the discretion of head teachers and nothing has transpired to necessitate a ruling of the Board on the subject'.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, complaints about excessive homework continued to be

voiced, and although Pryde remained unhelpful, [informing school committees that they had no power to interfere],<sup>117</sup> the Board at length determined to take action. In October 1893, it resolved to circularise all teachers and committees calling their attention to 'the system of excessive Home lessons' said to exist in some schools, and also to the fact that the Board strongly disapproved of such a course. Teachers were recommended to give as little homework as possible, 'Arithmetic and written exercises especially being disapproved'.<sup>118</sup> The Board believed that its resolution would be helpful, and the new homework regulations certainly received immediate and overwhelming support from the urban school committees.

The liberal members of the Board however, were well aware that abuses like excessive homework and the concentration upon percentages were but symptoms of the deeper problem that resided in the examination system itself. They yearned to do something to modify a system that served as much to check upon the 'efficiency' of a teacher as it did to attest to a child's progress by way of formal qualifications. The Board had already indicated its belief to Reeves in 1891 that teachers should be given more responsibility for conducting their own examinations, and in February 1893, at the same meeting at which the Board decided to abandon its publication of percentage passes, MacGregor proceeded to push the point further. He moved that the inspectors be instructed to be much less exacting in their demands in arithmetic and formal grammar and: 'That in order to enable the inspectors to devote more time to inspection [as distinct from examination] and to helping and directing teachers in the best methods of teaching, classification, and organisation, the Board suggest to the Minister of Education the advisability of amending the regulations so as to do away with all individual pass examinations except in the higher standards.'<sup>119</sup>

No one, least of all MacGregor, was in any doubt about the direction in which his proposed reforms were heading, but belief in their viability was not unanimous. The proposal to place less emphasis upon the learning of arithmetic and formal grammar in the province's classrooms was supported by a number of school committees,<sup>120</sup> while the *Otago Daily Times* welcomed signs that 'the giant Arithmos who strides across our education system is threatened'.<sup>121</sup> Opinion on the concept of teachers conducting their own examinations was much more sharply divided, the controversy it aroused suggesting that MacGregor had succeeded in his declared object 'to bring before the people of Otago and

New Zealand the absurdities and mischief of the present system of examinations'.<sup>122</sup>

The specific suggestion to allow teachers to classify pupils in the junior classes had first been publicised in Otago in 1890 when James Reid, Rector of the Tokomairiro District High School and graduate of Edinburgh Training College, reported that after a three year experiment, England and Scotland had abandoned individual examining in classes lower than standard four.<sup>123</sup> He urged that a similar change be made in New Zealand, believing that great educational benefit would accrue from granting more responsibility to classroom teachers. The NZEI had taken the matter up with Beeves each year from 1891 to 1893, but the Minister's view was that the country was not ready for such a major reform. According to the Institute President, David White, 'The Minister looked upon the proposal very favourably but the official mind did not see it the same way'.<sup>124</sup> MacGregor's actions therefore constituted a timely challenge to opinion in Otago to declare itself on the question of how much responsibility, if any, should be entrusted to teachers.

Press comment was certain that the more uneducated an individual parent was, the more likely it would be that that parent would possess a rigid faith in the examination result.<sup>125</sup> It was widely believed that this factor more than any other would impede the modification of the standards system. Teacher and school committee conservatism was also apparent. Some teachers were ready to state in public that they were opposed to the abolition of an examination system that had been 'entirely responsible for the improvement of education after 1877'.<sup>126</sup> And the Incholme School Committee was one group that believed that if the individual pass system were done away with in the lower standards 'indolence among teachers would be encouraged'.<sup>127</sup>

Bluntly put, this was also the view of the Board's inspectors. Probably regretting the fact that they had ever seen fit to mention the subject of examinations in their report for 1891, the inspectors entered a minute of objection to MacGregor's resolutions. They not only denied that their requirements for arithmetic and grammar were excessive but they also argued that jurisdiction in such matters was not within the province of the Board. Their major concern, however, was to defend the principle of external examinations which they regarded as being 'the chief lever of improvement in the schools'. They agreed that more time should be available for them to provide teachers with constructive assistance, but they emphatically did not want to see this gained at the

expense of examinations 'to test and encourage a higher class of work'.<sup>128</sup> As an alternative, they suggested that the Board appoint a further inspector in order that more time might be given to matters other than those of routine examinations.

But the Board was not impressed with these arguments and duly resolved: 'That for the future the Board expects the inspectors to overtake all the really indispensable work without the help of an assistant. And that the Board suggests to the inspectors that the work of examination might be greatly reduced in the lower standards by giving oral instead of written examinations.'<sup>129</sup> Moreover, in June 1893 the Board passed both of MacGregor's resolutions despite the inspectors' minute of objection and the views of a minority of Board members.<sup>130</sup> Thus for the first time in the Board's history, the inspectors discovered that the Board was not going to give way to the opinions of its officers on professional matters that were in major dispute. With considerable justification, the inspectors argued that their policies were consistent with the rulings of the national Department, but the attitude of liberal members on the Board suggested that they had come to the conclusion that the inspectorate had little to offer by way of positive contribution to reforms that were needed in the classrooms.

Although Habens' reply to the Board's resolutions was suitably cautious, the measles epidemic in 1893 provided advocates for lessening the burden of examinations with an unexpected opportunity to press their cause further. By June of that year, it was found that the examination schedule had been so seriously disrupted by the closure of schools that it seemed unlikely that the backlog of inspection and examination could be overtaken. Thereupon the Board decided that in all schools affected, the examination of children below standard four would be abandoned. It resolved further: 'That the teachers be instructed that in those schools in which the annual examinations are dispensed with they are to classify the children according to their attainments and opportunities, and every child is to be advanced who is reasonably fit for it; and that teachers are to be informed that the parent or guardian of any child not advanced by the teacher shall have the right to present the child for examination by the inspector at the first opportunity.'<sup>131</sup> Habens immediately ruled that the resolution was *ultra vires* and, as he was entitled to do, ordered the examinations to proceed as usual.<sup>132</sup> The Board had no option but to obey.

In the following year, the Department again constrained the desire of the Board to liberalise examination procedures in the classrooms. In

February 1894, the Inspectors' Conference in Wellington recommended to the government that teachers be allowed freedom of classification in standards one to three. The Board was so convinced that the recommendation would be accepted that at its meeting in May it resolved that no further individual examinations would take place in these classes in Otago's schools. But the Board's anticipation was not correct. The Department finally granted the concession to standard one and two classes only, and an irate Board was forced once more to rescind its earlier resolution.

There could now be no doubt that the caution towards educational change displayed by the Inspector-General and the Board's own inspectors, cast them in the role of scapegoats for past evils as far as the liberal members of the Board were concerned. While Habens was described as being 'so satisfied that the present regulations were all that could be desired that nothing short of an expression of opinion of the people of the Colony could have any effect on him',<sup>133</sup> Board members also spoke openly of the need for new blood in the Inspectorate. By June 1894, Donald Petrie had had enough. Having served the district for nearly 25 years, he resigned his position to take up an appointment as Chief Inspector for the Auckland Board. In accepting his resignation, the Board's members demonstrated little generosity or courtesy in its appreciation of his work. A formal motion of thanks was passed [although at first there was some difficulty in finding a seconder], but in the discussion which followed, members spent most of the time commenting on the value that would accrue from having 'new blood inspecting the schools ... instead of having stereotyped reports from an inspector who went over the same ground year after year'.<sup>134</sup>

For his part, Petrie provided a thinly-veiled criticism of recent Board policies when he claimed that if the Board 'wished to carry out the regulations of the Department as the Department wished them to be carried out', the Board would find amongst its present officers, men who possessed the necessary capacity and character to do the job.<sup>135</sup> The implication was obvious. Petrie, who had shown himself over the years to be able to withstand sometimes vicious criticism, from parents and teachers, was unable to cope with a situation in which the Board sought to interfere with professional regulations laid down by the Department and thereby placed the inspectors in a position of divided loyalty. Nevertheless, Petrie's departure symbolised beyond any other single event, the changes occurring in Otago's educational thinking. Although a faithful and not unintelligent official, Petrie's rigid paternalistic

attitude towards teachers, school committees and pupils, was beginning to pass out of fashion. He was too old to adapt comfortably to the change, and much too authoritarian in his outlook to cope with reformist sentiment on the Board.

The Board, on the other hand, derived comfort from the fact that it received enthusiastic support from many school committees for its actions relating to the examination system and for the petitions which it addressed frequently to the Department urging further modifications in syllabus prescriptions. While critics like Petrie were aghast at the Board's penchant for exceeding what they regarded as being its rightful authority, the teachers in the district could not complain by 1894 that they were employed by a body that was insensitive to demands for reforms in the classrooms. By this date, in fact, it had become clear to all that the Board had set its sights firmly on gaining as much professional responsibility for teachers as the Minister and the Department could be persuaded to yield. In this respect, the Board's attitude towards its teachers was no longer plagued with the ambiguity that still coloured the thinking of the inspectors and the Department.

In these circumstances, it was unfortunate that the Otago Institute was not able to exercise a stronger voice on the local scene. Between 1890 and 1894 the NZEI, encouraged by Reeves' support, went from strength to strength, but the Otago Branch suffered an eclipse in fortune. As late as 1894, the Dunedin membership was a mere 62, 55 being teachers and nearly half of these, headmasters.<sup>136</sup> The local Institute lost credibility with many teachers when it was unable to prevent them from being directly affected by the impecunious state of the Board's finances. On the other hand, the endeavours which it made to preserve salaries led the Institute into a strained relationship with the Board, a relationship which did not help it to provide strong and immediate support for some of the Board's more controversial education policies. The atmosphere between the Board and the Institute was more than a little cool after White's attack on the 'Three Name' appointments scheme in 1889, but the nadir was reached in December 1890 when the Board reluctantly decided that it would have to reduce its 'bonus' payments to teachers.<sup>137</sup>

From the time that the scheme had been introduced by Professor Shand, the Board regarded its bonus payments for qualifications, along with its later encouragement of teacher training, as being the most positive way of improving the quality of work in the classrooms. It was ironic therefore, that at a time when the conventional 'standards system'

was beginning to fall into serious disrepute, the Board was forced to modify its 'bonus' scheme owing to the pressing financial problems it was facing. The difficulty was that while the Board's regular income was either static or declining during these years, its teachers as a group were increasing in seniority and formal qualifications - the criteria upon which bonus payments were based. The result was that the costs of the scheme were increasing at the rate of £500 per year and the Board had no alternative but to bow to the reality of the size of its purse.

Matters were made worse by the fact that after it had promised to redistribute some of the money saved by 'bonus' reductions to the poorly paid teachers in rural districts, the Board discovered that its financial situation was so parlous that it could not honour the undertaking.<sup>138</sup> The institute complained bitterly that the Board's economies were again being exercised chiefly at the expense of teachers, concluding 'that in respect to the modification of the bonus system the Board has been guilty of a glaring breach of faith'.<sup>139</sup> The teachers' case attracted considerable public sympathy, sympathy that did not fail to note that in the previous year the Board had seen fit to raise the salaries of its inspectors and office staff. The *Otago Daily Times* considered that the Board's retraction of its promises was scandalous. It concluded: 'Averse as we have always been to seeing educational affairs sucked in, like other good things, by the vortex of centralisation, we cannot help feeling that a few more such shameless transactions on the part of our own Education Board, or other Boards, will reconcile us to seeing our education system entirely administered from that centre whence so many things are already badly administered.'<sup>140</sup> The *Times* might have done better to devote its critical attention to the capricious nature of the Board's income. Nevertheless, it was certainly unfortunate that the justifiable decision to reduce 'bonuses' coincided with a sharp reduction in attendance income.

On the other hand, despite their reductions in salary, Otago's teachers were still the highest paid per position in the country. In 1892, for example, an Otago teacher in a school with an average attendance of between 30 and 40 pupils received £163 or more p.a., depending on bonuses. His counterpart in North Canterbury received £150, in Auckland £135, in Westland £123 and in Taranaki £107.<sup>141</sup> The advantage was appreciated by the local teachers who for all their frustration with the Board's retrenchments, were even less inclined to favour the introduction of a uniform national salary scale which they suspected would discount their position. The relative munificence of



Otago salaries, in fact, placed the Institute in a poor bargaining position because after 1890, the teaching market in the province became grossly oversupplied.

By 1891, the scarcity of employment for teachers had become a matter of public comment. In March of that year, there were more than 350 applicants for nineteen vacant pupil-teacherships,<sup>142</sup> and two years later, the situation had deteriorated so alarmingly that the Albany Street School Committee felt it necessary to resolve: 'That the Education Board be written to, drawing its attention to the large number of teachers applying for the various vacancies and that the committee do respectfully suggest that no encouragement be given by the Board to young people in our public schools to qualify as teachers for the next two years.'<sup>143</sup>

It was doubtful that the Board needed reminding of the problem that had arisen [the Secretary privately confessed we are turning out too many trained teachers who cannot get employment],<sup>144</sup> but it was reluctant to take the action the committee suggested. Indeed, some of the decisions forced upon the Board on the grounds of economy made the position worse. In May 1892, for example, many school committees were informed that: 'The financial circumstances of the Board render it important that the staff of its schools be brought rigidly within the limits fixed by its scale. The Board has therefore decided to notify all committees of schools at present overstaffed that the surplus teachers will be withdrawn as soon as possible.'<sup>145</sup> As a result of this economy, and others of like kind, more teachers were soon chasing fewer positions.

Had the Board responded logically to the supply and demand nexus that ruled its income, it could well have reduced teaching salaries still further and deliberately opened up the district's vacancies to applicants from all parts of New Zealand. From the national point of view this would also have had the advantage of dispersing teacher supply more evenly throughout the country. The Board's traditional attitude of coolness towards teachers from outside the district was, however, maintained and reinforced by the parochialism which surrounded appointments by school committees. It was true that except for a brief interval of retaliation to the Southland Board at the end of 1891, the Board never refused as a matter of policy to send forward the names of outside candidates to school committees. Nevertheless, few teachers were able to immigrate to the province. The Board paid lip service to the principle of 'open application', even going to the extent in 1894 of

circularising other boards to ask them to follow Otago's practice of 'never treating its own teachers partially in the matter of appointment'.<sup>146</sup> But whatever the reason for this audacious claim,<sup>147</sup> it was not a statement that withstood close examination.

Looked at in one way, the Board's attitude could be held to exemplify the triumph of localism over economic sense. But it could also be argued that the assumption of the Board and the school committees that the district's teachers should be sheltered from the worst winds of supply and demand, was an indication of their belief that the quality of educational services which Otago had built up over the years, should be preserved. An excellent example of this was the Board's decision to keep the Training College functioning when there were no longer any strong economic or recruitment reasons to justify its continued maintenance.

Between 1878 and 1893, the Board spent a total of £34,699 on teacher training, £15,667 of this sum being derived from ordinary Board revenue after the abolition of the government grant in 1887.<sup>148</sup> This was the Board's evidence that it was as good as its word when it informed Reeves in 1891 that in its view 'perfectly satisfactory results cannot possibly be secured in the public schools however unexceptional the Education system and Department regulations may be, unless teachers thoroughly qualified by scholarship, professional training and personal character be secured in sufficient numbers for the schools'.<sup>149</sup> After 1890, however, it was increasingly difficult for the Board to find the necessary £2000 per year to keep the Training College in operation. For a time it succeeded by using the money saved from reductions in the 'bonus' payments, but the Otago Institute made it very clear that it was strongly opposed to teachers having their salaries reduced 'in order to equip men more fully to compete with themselves'.<sup>150</sup> The charge that the Board was defending the principle of professional training by relying on the pockets of others was, in fact, impossible to deny. As a result members were driven once again to urge the government to re-establish special support for the College.

Unfortunately for their case, Reeves did not look upon teacher training with the same sense of urgency that Stout had shown. Nor was the position helped by the oversupplied teaching market. In January 1892, Reeves invited the NZEI to make recommendations on the subject of teacher training<sup>151</sup> but the Institute showed no pressing interest in the Minister's invitation. The Board, however, followed the question up and finally extracted a promise from Reeves to grant the Dunedin College a sum of £500 out of a special vote for technical and further

education that it was hoped that parliament would pass later that year.<sup>152</sup> In August the Board submitted to the Minister a lengthy analysis of the problems with which it was confronted in maintaining the College. Wisely ignoring the oversupplied state of the teaching market, the Board concentrated its argument upon the educational value of keeping the Training College open. It pointed out that unless it received some immediate assistance, student allowances would have to be abolished. This in turn, it was believed, would lead to closing down the institution altogether because 'a large proportion of the students [and these as a rule the most talented and promising] belong to families unable to maintain their sons and daughters in attendance without the help afforded by the Board'.<sup>153</sup> Reeves was urged to do what he could to sustain a supply of 'well-educated and properly trained teachers' for the public schools. In November 1892, the Board received the small sum of money which it had been promised, but it was a gesture from the government that did nothing to restore the College to a sound financial footing.

By this date, the size of the College was not inconsiderable. In December 1892, 72 students were enrolled [35 men and 37 women]). Six were third-year students, 25 second-year, and 39 were enrolled in their first year of training. Four of the third-year students had completed their pupil-teacher training before coming to the College and one had also graduated as Master of Arts at the University of Otago by his third year at the Training College. Two of the others [one a woman] had graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees. Twenty of the second-year students had completed their pupil-teacher apprenticeships before enrolling at the College. One had graduated with a Master's degree by her second year, while another possessed a Bachelor's degree. Of the first-year students, 21 had completed their pupil-teaching and three were graduates.<sup>154</sup> It was obvious that the state of the labour market had substantially raised the quality of the students attending the Training College. Nor could it occasion surprise that teachers in Otago's schools cavilled at maintaining such a group at what they considered their expense. Nevertheless, the Board's decision to keep the College open as long as possible was a decision that was generally supported by the wider community, especially some of the more influential school Committees. When in August 1894, the Board was forced through its lack of finance to announce that the Training College would be closed,<sup>155</sup> the Dunedin Conference was one group which urged that teacher training be kept in existence in a modified form.<sup>156</sup>

The Training College finally closed its doors at the end of December 1894. But as early as 20 December, a meeting of the Board and other interested parties was arranged to investigate alternative kinds of training that might be possible.<sup>157</sup> In the meantime it was decided to pay closer attention to the training of pupil-teachers. The lack of employment opportunities for teachers in the district during these years was probably responsible for the fact that there had been very little recent and sustained criticism of the pupil-teacher system. What was noteworthy was a general hardening of opinion against a form of training whereby: 'These children, withdrawn from their regular course of study at an age when they should just begin to realise how little they know, are placed in charge of classes sometimes containing pupils older than themselves.'<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, it was most unlikely that the Board would have disagreed with comments by legislators that the pupil-teacher system was both unsatisfactory in principle and excessive in its demands upon the trainees.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, the hard facts of finance ensured that reforms in this sort of training would be necessarily slow.

It was something of a tragedy for liberal members of the Board to find that lack of finance had undermined 'bonus' payments and teacher training, prerequisites in their view for better education and a better teaching profession. However, they continued to promote the status of teaching as a profession in ways that were consistent with their desire to grant teachers more responsibility for their own standards of work. In 1894 for example, the Board ruled firmly against the Moa Creek School Committee in the first case of overt religious discrimination against a teacher that had come before the Board.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, in June of that year, J.F.M. Fraser went so far as to propose that the Act be amended to allow teachers the right of direct representation on the Board.<sup>161</sup> A number of members agreed that the time had come for teachers to have an immediate voice in the Board's deliberations, but the final consensus of opinion was that the government would find the suggestion totally unacceptable.<sup>162</sup> One important outcome of the debate on Fraser's motion, however, was a decision to tackle once again the thorny issue of appointments procedures. These, the Board now, to a man described as being disgraceful.

In order to meet long-standing complaints of favouritism in appointments and restricted promotion prospects for teachers in small rural schools, the Board seriously entertained a proposal to establish an advisory appointments committee consisting of one Board member, one

inspector, and one teacher nominated by the Educational Institute. It was envisaged that the committee's task would be 'to assist the Board and the school committees in the appointment of teachers on principles calculated to secure promotion for efficiency and length of service',<sup>163</sup> the corollary being that the school committees would once more be restricted in the names sent forward for their selection. Not unexpectedly, the concept of an advisory committee met with strong opposition from many school committees. It was altogether too like the 'Three Name' system earlier rejected. Under Cohen's guidance, the Board thereupon turned its attention to the possibility of a grading and classification system for appointments and promotions, a system which later proved to be the forerunner of the national grading scheme for teachers.

As highlighted earlier, the idea of an 'impersonal' system of appointments and promotions had first received publicity among Otago teachers in 1889. In 1892, Mr W. Davidson, a teacher at the Blueskin School, sketched out how such a scheme might work when he delivered a paper on the topic to the Educational Institute.<sup>164</sup> The Institute thought sufficiently well of the proposal to transmit it to the Board for consideration,<sup>165</sup> but at the time the Board was so concerned with the likelihood of further salary reductions that the matter was allowed to lapse. Now, in 1894, Cohen judged that the time was right to reintroduce Davidson's scheme in a more detailed form. The essence of the proposal which Cohen submitted to the Board in November 1894 was very simple. Positions of responsibility would be graded in relation to size of schools, each position would carry with it prerequisites in the form of qualifications and experience, and no teacher would be eligible for appointment if he had not already served [in the case of senior appointments] in a position of lesser responsibility. For example, a candidate for a position of headmaster in a suburban school [-550 pupils] would not be eligible for appointment unless he had already served as first assistant in a large city school [550+ pupils] or as headmaster of a school [-350 pupils]. Under the scheme the school committees would still have a choice of applicants in most instances, but a choice that would obviously be restricted. In particular, committees in the large city schools would be prevented from indulging in the practice of promoting the teachers within their schools to higher positions of responsibility.<sup>166</sup>

Cohen stressed the fact that under the scheme, promotion would be almost 'automatic'. But for many committeemen, Board members, and

teachers, this was the very point that made a grading scheme seem distasteful. In their view, a bureaucratic device would destroy the long-cherished sentiment that 'The appointment of teachers should rest as far as possible with the parents of the children, and as the school committees are the direct representatives of the parents, the appointment of teachers should rest directly with the school committees'.<sup>167</sup>

So strong was this reaction, that it is doubtful whether the proposal for a grading scheme would have been seriously entertained had it not been for the influence of Mark Cohen with his long record of school committee service in Dunedin. Cohen deliberately set out to persuade as many committees as he could to accept the scheme in principle, while Davidson attended a Board meeting by invitation to comment on points of detail. Finally, the Board resolved to hold a conference of all interested parties early in 1895. It seemed therefore, that by December 1894, the Board was again making some headway with what had long been the worst single feature of its administration. Action like Cohen's was long overdue.

The renewed debate over appointments procedures revealed once more, the extent to which the Board was subject to school committee opinion when such opinion was forcibly expressed. During the years 1890 to 1894, the province's school committees had become even more sophisticated and successful in applying electoral pressure on the Board against reforms which they felt threatened their interests. Theirs was a strength, moreover, against which the endeavours of outstanding Board members like Hislop, MacGregor, Cohen and Fraser could not prevail. The 'closed' form of Board election ensured that for the most part it was the school committees which defined 'legitimate' public opinion on educational matters, and it was only on rare occasions [e.g. the textbooks controversy] that the Board was forced to encounter wider pressure groups in the community. The fact that the Board was able to adopt an increasingly reformist stance during these years did not in any way alter the point that it was able to do this only with tacit or sometimes overt approval of the committees.

Whether the Board would have been even more reformist in its outlook had it been a genuine 'public' authority,<sup>168</sup> is a matter of conjecture. What now became more obvious, however, was that the statutory limitations which had been placed on its authority by the 1877 Act, were a major obstacle confronting those members who desired to promote general educational reform. This was an even greater problem

than school committee parochialism. Those on the Board who were anxious to promote changes in the syllabus and in the examination procedures for example, soon found that they could achieve little without the sanction of central authority. Had Board members had their way, Otago would have had liberalised classrooms much more quickly than the caution of Habens and the inspectors in fact allowed. Yet Petrie was on strong ground when he complained in 1894 that the Board was exceeding its authority in its attempts to instruct inspectors on their examination procedures.

As the need for reform in the schools came to be more popularly expressed after 1890, so it became more obvious that there was a decided limit to what the Board could achieve by way of direct and immediate action. Some believed that this was sufficient reason to consider the value of the Board as an educational authority to be minimal. The newspaper critic *Civis* opined that: 'So long as the Board continues to quarrel among itself and members combine only to abuse the chairman, so long will primary education be safe. The danger begins when they address themselves to grammar, arithmetic and other esoteric subjects with which they have no proper concern.'<sup>169</sup> This comment, although grossly unfair, had the merit of pointing to the fact that the Board was not ideally placed to deal with changing educational needs that were emerging within the province. Despite the interesting and significant ideas which were expressed by Board members with respect to the rising demand for post-primary education for example, the Board as an authority responsible by law for superintending *primary* education in the district, was restricted in what it could actually achieve. In relation to this particular problem, in fact, the Board was not as well situated as had been its counterpart in provincial days.

What was becoming increasingly clear by 1894 was that the administrative structure that had been established by the 1877 Act could no longer cope with the realities confronting educational administrators and the teachers in the classrooms. Many spokesmen, it was true, still endorsed the static perception of administration and power that had been built into the 'checks and balances' machinery of the Act. Board members were wont to argue, for example, that boards and school committees should be preserved at all costs because only through such authorities could householders retain power over the schools.<sup>170</sup> With the emphasis upon 'retaining power', however, there usually went the implied corollary that the Act must be preserved in all its essentials - a conclusion that could not be justified in the light of an intelligent

analysis of what was actually occurring in educational administration and in the schools.

This was the fallacy evident in Bowen's thinking in 1894 when, after reflecting upon the progress that had taken place since 1877, the author of the Education Act concluded that local authorities must always be retained in the administrative system because 'the blunders of a central office are more deadly and far-reaching in their effects than the most stupid blunder of the most stupid committee'.<sup>171</sup> As political sentiment, Bowen's thesis could be guaranteed to appeal, but its negative standpoint provided no help to determining the much more important question of how and by whom were positive decisions to be made? Moreover, the extreme provincialism which had once so overwhelmingly buttressed Bowen's argument and which had shaped the structure of the 1877 Act, was on the wane. In 1893, the *Otago Daily Times* believed that opinion was very different from the days of 1877 when 'there was a paroxymal clutch retained on things provincial and not one jot or tittle of authority was willingly surrendered'.<sup>172</sup> Possibly, this interpretation erred on the side of optimism, but it did at least acknowledge evidence of events which Bowen appears to have ignored.

A much more penetrating analysis of the problem was provided by John MacGregor in January 1894.<sup>173</sup> Drawing upon his many years of experience as a Board member who had made energetic efforts to promote reform in the schools, MacGregor concluded that the major obstacle to development was the absence of a dynamic relationship between the Department and the schools. As far as MacGregor was concerned, the virtues that Bowen had recently expounded were a positive vice. He correctly perceived that many of the ills of inappropriate curricula compounded by the craze for measurable results were attendant upon the fact that 'there is no living relationship between the centre and the other members of the body'.<sup>174</sup> Although MacGregor had no love for Habens, whom he described as an authority 'who simply sits at the centre, like the gods of Epicurus and sees things spin',<sup>175</sup> he was convinced that no further substantial progress in education would take place until the inspectors were placed under the Department<sup>176</sup> and all individual pass examinations were abolished in the primary schools.

MacGregor's analysis, which had the virtue of accurately predicting later events, was not without its own weaknesses. He overlooked, for example, the fact that unified professional direction by the Department and self-responsibility by teachers, raised the strong possibility that the



role of critics like himself *within* the administrative structure would be placed at a discount. It was precisely on this point that Bowen had his strongest case. Nevertheless, MacGregor's experience as a board member had taught him, although apparently it had failed to teach Bowen, that an administrative structure which no longer facilitated the quality of education that was desired in the schools, could not continue to be justified by the shibboleths of political theory and the compromises of a past age.

### NOTES

1. L.Lipson, *The Politics of Equality* 1948 Chicago Chicago University Press p.26
2. Election address by David Pinkerton, successful labour candidate for Dunedin City. ODT 18 Nov 1890
3. ODT 11 Jan 1890
4. AJHR 1890 Vol 2 E-1 B pp.71-73
5. M.Sinclair, *William Pember Reeves* 1965 Oxford Clarendon Press p.210
6. ODT 26 Jan 1891
7. *Ibid* 30 Mar 1891
8. *Ibid* 25 May 1893
9. John MacGregor [1850-1936] was first elected to the Board in 1888 and served continuously until 1900. A native of Perthshire, MacGregor was to prove himself to be an outstanding member of the Board. He was a graduate of Edinburgh University and practised law in Dunedin. He was related by marriage to Robert Stout, and in 1891 was appointed to the Legislative Council. DNZB Vol 2 pp.16-17
10. ODT 15 Jan 1890
11. The Anderson's Bay School Committee for example, resolved 'That the "three name" system is the outcome of an earnest desire on the part of the Board to mitigate an acknowledged evil, the tendency of which is to lessen the usefulness of committees and lower the dignity of the teaching profession, and the system is entitled to a fair trial'. ODT 20 Jan 1890
12. For example, the Macraes Sch Cte. See J.E.King, *The History of Macraes School* Unpublished Diploma study, University of Otago 1971, p.36
13. In May 1890 the Maheno Sch Cte resolved: 'Your committee cannot help having grave doubts of the vision of the Education Board in throwing the whole onus of appointment of a teacher from such a large number of applicants on a committee'. ODT 5 May 1890
14. OEB LB 39 1893 Pryde/Sawyer's Bay School Cte 21 Sep 1893 p.816
15. ODT 25 Apr 1890
16. Paper read to the Dunedin Conference. ODT 8 Aug 1890
17. OEB LB 39 1893 Pryde/A.McGregor 20 Jun 1893 p.66
18. ODT 30 Dec 1891

19. *Ibid*
20. *The Globe* 3 June 1891
21. ODT 25 Feb 1893
22. OEB LB Gov 3 15 July 1893 p.693
23. *Ibid* Gov 3 Borrie/J.McKenzie 15 Sep 1893 p.714
24. ODT 10 June 1893
25. OEB LB 35 1890 Pryde/H.Brett Auckland 20 Feb 1890 p.256
26. ODT 27 Aug 1890
27. OEB LB 35 1890 Pryde/Cohen 18 Sep 1890 pp.969-972
28. ODT 7 Feb 1891
29. *Ibid* 10 Feb 1891
30. *Ibid* 20 Feb 1891
31. Upon a close reading of the Act, the Board's justification appears to have been *dubious*. Clause 84(f) laid down that class books had to be approved by the Governor-General but the Act provided no legal sanction for the Board to stipulate the books to be used in Otago's schools.
32. OEB Circular Book 4/91
33. ODT 20 Feb 1891
34. *Ibid* 28 Apr 1891
35. *Ibid* 13 Mar 1891
36. *Ibid* 3 Apr 1891
37. NZPD 1891 Vol 72 pp. 210-213
38. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 19 May 1892 pp.520-525
39. ODT 7 Feb 1891
40. *Ibid* 19 May 1892
41. Ewing, *Development of the NZ Primary School Curriculum op.cit.* p.69
42. OEB Report 1890 App G pp.41-52
43. *Ibid* p.6
44. ODT 1 July 1891
45. *Ibid* 21 Aug 1891
46. OEB LB 37 1891/2 Pryde/Sec. Wellington Edn Board 24 Aug 1891 p.348  
Letters also to Auckland and North Canterbury Boards.
47. *Ibid* Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 14 June 1892 pp.534-535
48. ODT 5 Sep 1891 Peter Fraser was Minister for Education in New Zealand's first Labour government elected in late 1935. In 1939 he issued a comprehensive education policy statement [compiled for him by Dr C.E.Beeby, his Deputy-Director of Education] which began with the memorable lines: 'The government's objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right as a citizen, to free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers'. E.1. pp.2-3 AJHR 1939
49. *Ibid* 9 Oct 1891 Speech by D.Pinkerton 'Technical classes Association
50. AJHR 1888 Vol 2 E-11
51. P.W.Musgrave, *Sociology History and Education* 1970 London Methuen p.69
52. OEB LB 28 1884/5 Pryde/Tokomairiro Sch Cte 25 Apr 1885 p.752

53. ODT 6 Sep 1890
54. A point that was endorsed by Pryde in 1892 when he wrote of these classes: 'The School Committee has in each instance had complete control of the class and no record of the work accomplished has officially come before me'. OEB LB 38 1892/3 p.321
55. *New Zealand Schoolmaster* Aug 1887
56. ODT 3 Nov 1890
57. *Ibid* 8 Aug 1890
58. It was true that the Board's School of Art was potentially a competitor with the Association. The School of Art had been established in 1871 and was supposed to work with the schools to provide technical work. Whatever its specialist merits as an Art School, however, this institution had very little general effect upon education in the city; later, it was affiliated with the South Kensington scheme but its reputation remained poor. A great deal of the difficulty seems to have lain with the personality of the Director, David Hutton. Whatever his merits as an artist, he lacked the interest in education displayed by Riley. For its part, the Board never seems to have quite known what it should do with its School of Art.
59. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 19 May 1893 pp.520-525
60. ODT 5 Sep 1891
61. *Ibid* 15 Nov 1890
62. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Minister of Edn 24 May 1890 p.297
63. This created a precedent requiring Departmental approval. It was the first time that the Board awarded scholarships that could be taken up in an educational institution outside its district. Lincoln College was an agricultural college located a few miles from the town of Christchurch in North Canterbury.
64. OEB Report 1890 App G p.44
65. OEB LB 35 1890 Pryde/Porteous 20 Mar 1890 p.351
66. ODT 20 Feb 1891
67. OEB LB 37 1891/2 p.351 Figures as at 30 June 1891
68. *Ibid*
69. NZPD 1892 Vol 76 p.616
70. ODT 16 Sep 1892
71. *Ibid* 19 Feb 1892
72. OEB Report 1890 App G p.45
73. OEB LB 38 1892/3 p.108
74. *Ibid* p.525
75. ODT 17 June 1892
76. OEB LB 38 1892/3 Pryde/Mrs Cotton 22 July 1892 p.639
77. *Ibid*. Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 25 Oct 1890 p.347
78. Pryde wrote to one country teacher: 'The advanced work of the 6th standard and mathematics should I think be a fair course of instruction for the 7th standard'. OEB LB 36 1890/1 p.175
79. OEB Report 1890 App G p.45
80. ODT 16 Feb 1894

81. *Ibid* 16 Mar 1894
82. *Ibid* 28 Apr 1894
83. *Ibid* 16 Mar 1894
84. *Ibid* 29 Mar 1894
85. *Ibid* 15 Nov 1890
86. *Ibid* 12 July 1890
87. OEB LB 37 1891/2 Pryde/A.McCorkindale 4 June 1891 p.69
88. OEB Report 1893 p.8
89. ODT 18 Mar 1892
90. OEB LB 38 1892/3 p.p113, & .219
91. *Ibid* 38 1892/3 Pryde/Miss Kelsey 19 May 1892 p.360
92. ODT 17 Apr 1891
93. *Ibid* 5 Mar 1891
94. *Auckland Herald* 7 Feb 1891
95. OEB LB Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 21 Apr 1891 pp.390-393
96. *Ibid*
97. *Ibid*.Gov 3 Pryde/Habens 26 April 1893 pp.647-648
98. OEB Report 1893 App. C pp.36-37
99. ODT 15 July 1892
100. **ODT 11 Jan 1890**
101. *Ibid*. 11 Jan 1890
102. *Ibid* 9 Aug 1890
103. *Ibid* 7 July 1891
104. OEB LB 35 1890 Pryde/Sec. Southland Edn Board 22 Apr 1890 p.498
105. *Ibid*
106. *Ibid* 36 1890/1 Pryde/Miss Stevenson, Bendigo School 19 Feb 1891 p.524
107. *Ibid* 35 1890 Pryde/Headmaster George Street Sch 17 July 1890 p.860
108. OEB Report 1891 App E p.36
109. ODT 21 Oct 1892
110. *Ibid* 17 Feb 1893
111. OEB Circular Book 9/93 19 June 1893
112. ODT 21 Apr 1893
113. OEB Circular Book 9/93 19 June 1893
114. OEB LB 35 1891 Pryde/Bannockburn School Cte 20 Mar 1891 p.617
115. ODT 23 Sep 1892
116. OEB LB 35 1890 Pryde/ Sec Westland Edn Board 28 July 1890 pp. 880-887
117. *Ibid* 39 1893 Pryde/Oamaru South Sch Cte 27 Sep 1893 p.832
118. OEB Circular Book 12/93 23 Oct 1893
119. ODT 17 Feb 1893
120. OEB LB 39 1893 Pryde/Dunedin Conference 20 July 1893 p.669
121. ODT 21 Feb 1893
122. *Ibid* 30 Oct 1893
123. *Ibid* 30 July 1890 Paper delivered to the Otago Educational Institute
124. *Ibid* 25 July 1892
125. *Ibid* 21 Feb 1893, 2 Feb 1894 See also 'Otago Witness' 10 May 1894

126. *ODT* 18 Aug 1893
127. *Ibid*
128. *Ibid* 21 Apr 1893
129. *Ibid* 19 May 1893
130. The issue was in fact debated in terms of anti-Pryde-ites versus Pryde-ites. MacGregor led the faction that was opposed to the 'official' party and would not on this occasion have won the day had he not decided to employ the tactics of the 'filibuster'. After he had addressed the Board for over an hour, several members of the 'official' party left the meeting in disgust, thus allowing the resolutions to be passed. The point to note is that the Board's decision not to support its inspectors was by no means unanimous.
131. *ODT* 16 June 1893
132. *Ibid* 19 June 1893 Habens/Pryde
133. *Ibid* 20 Oct 1893
134. *Ibid* 15 June 1894
135. *Ibid* 2 Aug 1894
136. *Ibid* 4 June 1894
137. *Ibid* 19 Dec 1890
138. *Ibid* 21 Aug 1891
139. *Ibid* 18 July 1891
140. *Ibid* 18 July 1891
141. *Ibid* 4 Apr 1892 Data calculated by W.Davidson for Otago Educational Institute
142. *Ibid* 14 Mar 1891
143. *Ibid* 4 Aug 1893
144. OEB LB 38 1892/3 Pryde/A. McGregor 20 Jan 1893 p.66
145. *Ibid* 38 1892/3 Pryde/North East Valley Sch Cte 19 May 1892 p.365
146. OEB Circular Book 8/94 30 Mar 1894
147. It seems likely that this was a reaction to claims that other boards would not employ Otago teachers who could not get positions within the province. The general fact was that there was very little national mobility among teachers.
148. OEB LB 39 1893 p.626
149. *Ibid*.Gov 3 Pryde/Haberns 16 Apr 1891 pp.390-393
150. *ODT* 9 Nov 1891
151. *Ibid* 21 Jan 1892
152. OEB LB Gov 3 Fraser/Reeves 18 Aug 1892 p.555
153. *Ibid* Gov 3 Pryde/Reeves 31 Aug 1892 pp.560-563
154. *Ibid* 39 1893 Pryde/Sec Auckland Ed Bd 10 May 1893 pp. 435-437
155. OEB Report 1894 p.8
156. *ODT* 27 Sep 1894
157. *Ibid* 21 Dec 1894
158. *Ibid* 14 Jan 1891
159. NZPD Vol 81 p.386
160. *ODT* 21 Sep 1894 With committees being virtually in control of appointments, the evidence attests that teachers were often selected on religious grounds. The Board could not however, interfere unless a committee

was impolitic enough to publicise its reasons for selection. There is no evidence that the Board was ever religiously biased in its procedures, despite tales to the contrary which exist to the present day.

- 161. *Ibid* 15 June 1894
- 162. It is of interest to note that teachers were still agitating for this right in 1972.
- 163. ODT 16 Aug 1894
- 164. *Ibid* 4 Apr 1892
- 165. OEB LB 38 1892/3 Pryde/Sec Otago Ed'l Institute 20 July 1892 p.635
- 166. This was one of the strongest complaints of rural teachers because they found it almost impossible to get promotion to city schools.
- 167. ODT 23 Apr 1890
- 168. The word 'public' is defined here to mean an authority elected in the conventional manner by adult voters.
- 169. ODT 29 Apr 1893
- 170. *Ibid* 6 Feb 1893
- 171. A.G.Butchers, *History of Education in Canterbury* 1953 Christchurch Whitcombe & Tombs p.59
- 172. ODT 18 Jan 1893
- 173. *Ibid* 30 Jan 1894
- 174. *Ibid*
- 175. *Ibid*
- 176. They were finally placed under the Department twenty years later in the Education Act of 1914

## ***Chapter 7***

### ***The Board accepts the trend towards Centralisation 1895-1900***

In the last five years of the nineteenth century, New Zealand politics were dominated by Richard John Seddon, the country's first truly national politician, whose personal magnetism captured the imagination of the electorate from one end of the country to the other. He was a man who could be idolised or detested, but never ignored. William Pember Reeves once described Seddon as being a politician unencumbered with either theories or ideals who held power as the result of a long and untiring effort to find out what the people wanted and if at all possible to do it for them.<sup>1</sup> The success of the Premier's pragmatic policies was demonstrated by his electoral record. Re-elected in 1895 with an impressive majority, the Liberal Government lost some support in the general election of 1896, but three years later regained almost all of the seats that it had lost.

As is often the case with strong minded men, Seddon did not work comfortably with colleagues who possessed initiative of their own. After 1896, when Reeves was sent to London as Agent-General, the cabinet was increasingly composed of men who did not make the mistake of trying to rival their leader in publicity. By 1897 it could be said, as William Rolleston did, that New Zealand politics had taken on the form of government of the people by Seddon.<sup>2</sup> But as long as the Premier continued to give the voters what they wanted, his grip upon the government remained secure. In general, the public was delighted with what some were pleased to call, 'Seddon's wholesome mediocrity'.

Educational developments during this period depended very much upon Seddon's political priorities. As long as there was more immediate capital to be gained from such things as old age pensions, the Premier did not wish to embroil himself in the controversies that seemed always to threaten when government action on education was contemplated. The blunt fact was that Seddon was not prepared to take action on educational matters until he felt sure that demands for reform were sufficiently strong to sustain and endorse changes that might be initiated by the government. The Premier's attitude was signified by the

way he filled the Education portfolio. In March 1896, Reeves was replaced by W.C.Walker, an Oxford graduate and a farmer from Canterbury. Walker, who was a member of the nominated Legislative Council, was not noted for his previous interest in public education. It was popularly believed that he received the portfolio partly because of his past services to the Liberal Party and partly because of his friendship with John McKenzie, the Minister of lands.<sup>3</sup> It seemed probable too, that it suited Seddon at that particular time to have a good 'safe' man in charge of education. Walker quickly acquired the reputation of being a 'do nothing' minister, Cohen being but one of many who believed that he presented a sad contrast to Reeves, his distinguished predecessor.<sup>4</sup>

Government inertia with respect to educational policy was compounded by Habens' lack of interest in pressing for change. During the last years of his life, the Inspector-General was in poor health and he appears to have devoted an excessive amount of his attention to correcting the grammar in education boards' reports. He was quite unable to act as a counterfoil to a supine Minister and to provide positive guidance to boards and inspectors. The hiatus which resulted, ended only when Habens died in office on 3 February 1899. His successor, George Hogben, had not long taken up his duties when Seddon at last realised that educational reform could produce a political windfall.

The period was a very frustrating one for many educational critics in Otago who by 1894, had come to appreciate that there was a pressing need to revise the key assumptions that had been written into the 1877 Act. Many believed that the major problem was to locate initiative for change in a source that was stronger than that which had hitherto been the case. There was, however, no unanimity as to what this source should be, and this was what Seddon's delay in acting was all about. He was not prepared to move either towards more centralised direction or towards stronger regional administration until he was reasonably sure where the political preference lay. For the time being, therefore, the Board was forced to cope as best it could with demands that it lacked the resources and authority to satisfy.

The weaknesses in the Board's financial structure which had first become dramatically apparent after the measles epidemic in 1893 continued to be evident. In 1894, Reeves restored the 'working' average basis for payments and this, plus a small rise in average attendance, enabled the Board to increase its scale of allowances to school committees in 1895.<sup>5</sup> In that same year, members were sufficiently



confident of the future to authorise the construction of new Board offices, while as late as May 1897, it was reported that the Board's finances were healthy.<sup>6</sup> By the end of 1897, however, a small decrease in total average attendance was recorded, and within the space of a further year the downward trend which had been apparent in Otago's school population since 1890, had again become pronounced.

The number of pupils on the school rolls in December 1898 was 603 fewer than the figure for the previous year. There were 416 fewer pupils enrolled, and there was an overall decline of 824 in average daily attendance. Furthermore, it was in the urban areas that the decline was greatest, thus eroding the financial advantages which the Board enjoyed from its large schools in earlier years. In 1898, attendance at the city schools, which had been declining steadily after 1887, reached its lowest point since 1880.<sup>7</sup> A detailed inquiry in 1896 revealed that the large school in Union Street was enrolling barely half of its official entitlement of pupils,<sup>8</sup> a state of affairs which provided no comfort to the Board which in earlier days had been able to fund small schools out of capitation income from large institutions.

By 1899, the decline in overall school attendance had accelerated. In December of that year there were 1,179 fewer pupils on the school rolls than there had been in the previous year;<sup>9</sup> and the Board finally confessed that it did not know what more it could do to restore school attendance figures. Members were still reluctant to concede that the problem was a reflection of population migration from the province, but in July 1899 they were bluntly informed by the Department that they would have to get used to the fact that people were moving to other parts of the colony. Psychologically this was not something that the Board found easy to accept, and there can be little doubt that both officials and members invested far more confidence in the temporary financial improvement after 1895 than a prudent analysis of population trends would have dictated. However, by 1899 the financial implications of the decline in school attendance had become clear. In the space of two years the Board's income fell by more than £6000, while demands for expenditure remained constant. The Board, which was overdrawn in both its building and maintenance accounts, reported it would not be able to carry on much longer unless the extra capitation grant which had been abolished in 1887, was restored.<sup>10</sup> In 1900, extra assistance was forthcoming. Although it was granted at the cost of increased central government control, the Board was more than ready to pay the price demanded.

Meanwhile, in order to cope with its new financial crisis, the Board was forced to resort to expedients which it had employed in the past. Teachers' salaries were again reduced, schools were staffed strictly according to scale, and other economies,

which were not in keeping with the rising tide of prosperity in the general community, were exercised. For the first time, the Board began to look seriously at the viability of many of the small schools serving outlying districts. Those likely to become redundant were a luxury that the Board could no longer afford. As early as 1896, some quick arithmetic produced the calculation that 47 schools in the district, each with an average attendance of fewer than twenty pupils, were costing the Board £1,342 per year.<sup>11</sup> The Board decided to inform the respective school committees that unless a rapid improvement in attendance took place, their school would have to be closed. Many of those schools were, in fact, closed or consolidated in the next few years, and while it was true that new schools in recently developed areas like the Gatlins District were provided, the Board did not need much persuading by 1900 that the traditional method of capitation financing badly needed revision.

To arrest the decline in attendance, the Board made a determined effort to enforce the compulsory clauses of the Act. Its concern with truancy was no longer primarily altruistic. Regular attendance meant money, and any means likely to deter delinquent absenteeism was considered worthy of pursuit. In 1895, the Board began to organise the appointment of police officers as truant inspectors in the smaller urban centres like Balclutha and Oamaru.<sup>12</sup> These supplemented the work of Mr Aitken in Dunedin whose services were also available to committees in rural districts reasonably close to the city. By 1897, Aitken's official position was fully recognised by the courts, while in most cases, the school committees, although they were still the legal overseers of attendance, preferred to leave court proceedings in the hands of the truant Officer. According to Pryde, they were 'glad to be rid of the business . . . which brings them more or less into conflict with parents'.<sup>13</sup> Certainly the Board favoured as much centralisation in the enforcement of compulsory attendance as possible.

Many educational arguments were evinced to justify regular attendance at school, but in the Board's view the most compelling reason was that in one school year irregular attenders caused it to lose approximately £11,000 in potential income.<sup>14</sup> This was a calculation that was as alluring as it was unrealistic because it was based upon the pointless assumption that all enrolled children would return a full attendance annually. Nevertheless, it was this thought which led the Board to make more serious attempts to check defaulters who claimed that they were attending private schools. In addition to increasing the number of persons engaged in truant supervision, the Board decided in 1896 to extend the service to private schools on request. Although no publicity was given to the fact, Pryde informed the Mother Superior of the Dunedin Convent School that he had asked Aitken to give her school 'an occasional call'.<sup>15</sup> The point was significant because whatever its convenience to the Board, it involved accepting the

principle that non state schools were entitled to benefit from the services of an official paid from public revenue.

While the Board continued to press the government to make compulsory attendance a direct responsibility of education boards, it was satisfied that it had done what it could to tighten attendance by 1899. It was disappointed, therefore, to find that the financial benefits accruing from its actions were marginal. Certainly, it was in no position to discourage any children who wanted to attend school beyond the statutory age, and more especially those pupils pursuing work in standard seven. The Board Secretary bluntly informed one inquirer in 1897, that there was practically no limit to the age at which a child could stay at school past standard six,<sup>16</sup> while the Board as a whole acquiesced willingly with the widespread growth of standard seven classes. In addition to senior classes in the district high schools and to small numbers of standard seven pupils in many rural schools, there were fifteen schools in Dunedin alone which provided separate standard seven classes by November 1897. Although several of the latter were small, numbering no more than seven pupils, five city schools had classes of between 40 and 60 scholars. These in their turn were eclipsed by the Normal School which registered a massive standard seven enrolment of 130 pupils.<sup>17</sup>

According to the E-Report for 1898,<sup>18</sup> a total of 1,253 standard seven pupils were enrolled in the Otago district. If data supplied by Pryde to the Principal of the Otago Girls' High School was correct, 531 of these attended schools in Dunedin. The significance of these figures is apparent when they are set alongside High School enrolment for the same period in Dunedin which was variously estimated at being about 350.<sup>19</sup> While the financial benefit of standard seven work to the Board was considerable [very little by way of extra staff and accommodation being needed to service these classes], the size of the enterprise had now grown to such an obvious extent that it was no longer possible for the Board to pretend that it was not straying into the field of secondary education. It would have strained credulity to have argued for example, that 130 pupils sought entry to the senior class in the Normal School because their parents did not know what else to do with them.

The Board did not even try to maintain its evasive stance of earlier years. In 1895, the inspectors laid down a syllabus for standard seven work consistent with the prescriptions set for national public examinations. In addition to arithmetic and English, the syllabus provided for Euclid, algebra, commercial geography and optional work in either Latin or French.<sup>20</sup> Although there could be no doubt that what was outlined involved only a slight modification of conventional secondary school programmes, the syllabus was greeted with a storm of protest from headmasters of the primary schools in the city. These authorities claimed that the syllabus would interfere with their major task of preparing standard seven

pupils for Matriculation, Civil Service and Teachers' Entrance Examinations. As a result, the Board agreed that the new syllabus would not be obligatory if it could be shown to interfere with other work that teachers might be pursuing in standard seven classes. In 1897, Pryde summed the position up nicely when he informed the Hawkes Bay Board that 'The Class X [Std. 7] syllabus is strictly adhered to but permission is given to depart from it in the case of candidates who are preparing for Civil Service or Matriculation exams and the Inspectors examine them on that work'.<sup>21</sup> It was therefore, no longer any secret that in return for capitation allowances paid by the government, the Board was providing free secondary schooling for those senior pupils who sought it.

These developments were bitterly criticised by secondary school authorities in Otago who endorsed Bowen's belief that the movement to tack secondary education onto the primary schools was not wise.<sup>22</sup> Extremist opinion railed against 'the useless seventh standard which is a bastard apology for secondary education, involving a serious injury to the legitimate secondary schools',<sup>23</sup> while high school administrators were particularly sensitive to the fact that as the standard seven enrolment in the city increased, the numbers attending the regular secondary schools declined. They accused the Board of deliberately setting out to provide secondary education on the cheap.<sup>24</sup> Although there could be no doubt that by authorising the preparation of pupils for advanced public examinations the Board had placed itself in a tenuous legal position, the standard seven classes clearly satisfied a popular demand. This appears to have accounted for the fact that in Otago, as elsewhere, the development of secondary work in the primary schools was allowed to go legally unchallenged.

By 1899, Seddon was ready to promise free secondary education to children of proven ability. Many Otago parents, with their considerable experience of obtaining free secondary schooling via standard seven, now welcomed the prospect of obtaining the same service from regular high schools. It was clear that what the Board had done was in large part to satisfy a community need until the government saw fit to take further action. What the Board was not able to do, however, was to initiate any worthwhile reforms in the content of conventional secondary schooling. As in earlier years, it was severely handicapped in this respect by its status as a *primary* education authority. This was unfortunate because while it was true that the community attached a growing importance to advanced examination qualifications, not everyone believed that the majority of standard seven pupils needed or desired a duplication of the work provided in the regular high schools.

It was publicly claimed [and never denied] that many children stayed on at school beyond standard six either to meet rising expectations by employers or because the 'Factories Act' prevented them from entering the labour market.

Critics were convinced that there was a strong case for more 'practical' forms of post-primary education, and attention became centred once more on proposals for technical education which MacGregor and others had espoused in earlier years. At a hastily called conference of education boards in 1895, it was resolved among other tilings that: 'The Minister of Education be requested to amend the Regulations so as to enable Education Boards if they think proper, to make provision for the establishment of central schools for children who have passed standard five, and to gather such children into such schools and to give the instruction imparted in such schools a more practical bias.'<sup>25</sup> Nothing came of this recommendation which closely paralleled MacGregor's concept of a 'central school' and which was designed to abolish the legal restriction that had prevented the Otago Board from taking any further action on the matter in 1894.

In 1898, however, MacGregor publicised his proposals for technical education once more. In a lengthy paper delivered first to the Otago Educational Institute and later to the Education Board, he reiterated his case for the establishment of a central school in the city which would take in all standard seven pupils. The crux of his argument, which in fact presupposed selective academic schooling for an elite, was that 'public money spent in making a mediocre doctor, lawyer, or minister out of a lad who would have made a good mechanic, farmer, or merchant is money mis-spent'. But this was a proposition which was no more acceptable than it had been previously to parents who regarded formal qualifications as the prize to be gained. Nor did MacGregor improve his case by quoting extensively from Robert Morant's report in 1897 upon the French *Ecole Primaire Supérieure*. Although MacGregor was convinced that this institution was closely allied to the type of school he had in mind, comments from French sources stating that it was designed for pupils 'whose ambition and probable destiny is to fill one of those numerous mediocre positions which agriculture or industry or commerce offer to the Worker...'<sup>26</sup> were not calculated to find favour with egalitarian sentiment in Otago. Press comment in the district remained stolidly unimpressed with 'the latest weaponry from France',<sup>27</sup> while the Board was still legally prevented from taking any action in the matter had it desired to do so.

Even with respect to the curricula of its district high schools, the Board was able to do little to harness the desire for social mobility to more effective forms of secondary schooling. It was, in fact, unable to overcome the apparent incongruity between the kind of education sought, and that deemed by thoughtful critics to be most relevant to the needs of the majority of the pupils and the community as a whole. In 1899, the Board's inspectors again reported that although in their view the curricula of the district high schools was far too academic for most pupils, it seemed to be supported by the majority of rural parents who were mainly interested in the provision of inexpensive ways in which

their children could qualify for public examinations.<sup>28</sup> Once again, it was obvious that while Seddon's newly assumed role as the facilitator of access to secondary education was one that was easy and popular, the way of the educational reformer was much more difficult. Furthermore, apart from providing a forum for ideas like those of MacGregor's, there was little that the Board could do in terms of positive assistance towards reform.

The fact that the weight of opinion favoured easier access to the high schools however, did not mean that there was a complete absence of community interest in other forms of further education, especially education for older persons. The work of the 'Technical Classes Association' signified the presence of a community need and interest upon which reformers might build, but the Board found yet again that there was a limit to the encouragement it could provide. Continuing to be impressed with the fact that many persons could not cope with the Association's trade classes because they lacked mastery of elementary English and arithmetic, G.M.Thompson, the Association's Secretary, urged the Board in 1895 to conduct night classes for older students in these subjects. The Board was unable to do this by law but it transmitted Thompson's request to the Department, adding the rider that it would be helpful if Reeves had the Act amended to allow education boards the necessary discretion in the case.<sup>29</sup> Cohen was especially hopeful that the Minister would favour the Board's point of view. But this was not what transpired. Within three weeks, the Board was informed that it was not authorised to spend any of its funds on night classes and that the Minister was not prepared at that time to amend the Act.<sup>30</sup> Several months later, Reeves' attitude had hardened still further. He informed the Education Boards' Conference that he would not help continuation classes because all the money available was needed to support regular education. He was also opposed to the system of night schools in principle because he feared that it would tempt children to leave ordinary schools prematurely.<sup>31</sup> Faced with this refusal, the Board had no option but to withdraw from participating in continuation schooling.

The opportunity that was thereby lost to the local community was soon demonstrated. When it was learned in April 1895 that the Board had been refused permission to finance and control night classes, the Albany Street, Union Street, and George Street School Committees decided to share their meager resources and provide evening classes at the Union Street School for the remainder of the winter months. Classes in English and arithmetic were offered at seven pence per week and it was stipulated that those who enrolled had to be fourteen years of age or older.<sup>32</sup> The initial response so overwhelmed the organisers that they had hastily to engage extra, instructors. Furthermore, after more than 80 persons had enrolled, an additional class was established for women applicants, all of whom had in the first instance been turned away. The students,

whose ages ranged from fourteen to twenty-six, were reported to be the kinds of people that the classes were designed to assist, and the organizers believed that the venture had proved its worth.

When the classes began again in the following year however, it was found that student support had fallen off drastically. The undertaking then faded quickly away, as Cohen and others had feared it might. It is difficult to tell whether the fate of these classes implied that Thompson's original thesis had been incorrect or whether it was a reflection on the quality of teaching provided. But what did emerge clearly was the moral that local enthusiasm without official support and resources was a totally inadequate basis upon which to attempt to maintain continuity in worthwhile educational provision. The Dunedin night classes appear, in fact, to represent a classic example of an opportunity for development that went begging when the local educational authority was unable to act in response to local demand.

The Board was able to do a little more to assist the development of conventional forms of technical education, although once again its activities were severely circumscribed by events beyond its control. In August 1895, the education boards acting in concert, prevailed upon Reeves to introduce the 'Manual & Technical Instruction Bill' which the Minister had first publicised in 1892.<sup>33</sup> In his own words, Reeves was pleased that public opinion had at last caught up with his Bill, but as events transpired, the legislation was passed only after arduous debate. While the Bill was in progress, the Board again publicly acknowledged its support for the principles which the Bill contained.<sup>34</sup> After the measure became law moreover, the Board promptly set up a committee to investigate ways in which the district might take advantage of the provisions in the new Act.<sup>35</sup>

Just what profit there was to be had from the Act was by no means immediately clear. The total amount of money available for manual and technical instruction in any one year was decidedly limited. It was also the case that if the Board were to receive the special grants offered, it would first have to supply most of the necessary equipment from its existing resources. The committee quickly decided that the Board was in no financial position to establish advanced classes in technical instruction as defined by the Act. These, it was agreed, should remain the responsibility of the 'Technical Classes Association'.<sup>36</sup> Thereupon attention was turned to the provisions in the Act relating to manual instruction. These authorised boards either to provide manual instruction as part of the regular school curriculum or to establish special classes outside ordinary school hours. Only classes in the latter category earned a special capitation grant and in the committee's view, the establishment of these classes was not a viable financial proposition either. The alternative was to include manual instruction within the

normal school day, something to which progressive opinion in Otago would not have been averse. In December 1895, the committee wrote to the Department asking if it were the Government's intention to modify the existing syllabus regulations so as to make it possible for regular manual instruction to be provided.<sup>37</sup> Habens replied that this was not the government's intention, at which point the committee reluctantly concluded that there was no significant way in which the Board could use the provisions of the Act.

The result was that very few schools in Otago benefitted financially from establishing classes in manual and technical instruction. Prior to 1901, three schools received grants under the Act for classes in woodwork, and one school also received a grant for a class conducted in agricultural chemistry.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, most of these classes had been established and had received some support from the Board prior to 1895. In 1898, Pryde admitted that the Board had done almost nothing to introduce technical education into the curriculum of the primary schools,<sup>39</sup> but he went on to comment that the classes conducted under the auspices of the 'Technical Classes Association' had reached 'an eminent degree of success'.<sup>40</sup> This was a qualification which acknowledged the fact that by that date, the Board had found a way to use the Act to promote the Association's work.

The Board's decision in 1896 to leave responsibility for technical instruction to the 'Technical Classes Association' was consistent with the co-operative relationship which had grown up between the two bodies over the years. It was early recognised, however, that the limited finance available under the Act would not work to the advantage of the Association. This soon proved to be the case. By 1897, the Association was receiving less financial assistance from the government than it had received in the years before the 'Manual and Technical Instruction Act' became law. At the beginning of that year, the Association was faced with a major crisis when it was forced to find new and more expensive premises to house its activities. Thompson wrote to the Board suggesting that the Board either take over all the assets and responsibilities of the Association or else provide the Association with a permanent building in which it could carry on its work.<sup>41</sup>

What Thompson had in mind was the provision of evening facilities at the Normal School. This, however, would have cost a considerable sum of money for necessary renovations and the Board was not successful in its attempts to get a government grant for the purpose.<sup>42</sup> As a compromise therefore, new premises for the Association were found, the Board undertaking to pay £75 per year for five years towards the cost of the rental.<sup>43</sup> It was also decided that since its new locale restricted the Association in terms of developing new classes, courses at the Board's School of Art would be opened to members of the Association at a reduced



fee. In return, the Board now exercised its right to apply under the Act for a grant towards the costs of instruction at the School of Art.<sup>44</sup> By 1898, the Board was able to report with considerable satisfaction that 1,104 pupils were attending technical classes in the City of Dunedin.

In retrospect it is clear that it would have made economic sense for the Board to have used the School of Art for grant purposes earlier than it did, but the community as a whole seems to have had little confidence in the worth of the School. As late as 1897 it was still being described in the press as 'a third-rate family affair'.<sup>45</sup> Rather belatedly, the Board came to the defence of the School and its staff, although privately members must have had some doubts because in June 1898 the Board asked Habens to consider bringing an expert from Australia to inspect all the Art Schools in the Colony.<sup>46</sup> The difficulties associated with the School of Art were something for which the Board had to take responsibility. Even so, its attempts to promote 'practical' education during this period were not without merit. Frustrated by meagre finance and by legislation which provided little genuine encouragement, the Board attempted to cater for a need which continued to grow until the government was ready to take fresh initiatives on technical training in 1900.

Similar frustrations overtook the Board's policies regarding kindergarten work, the enthusiasm of individual members being defeated by the Board's lack of legislative authority and a chronic shortage of finance. It was noticeable that after the burden of individual examination in standards one and two was lifted in 1894, an increasing number of urban school committees became interested in introducing what was loosely called the 'kindergarten system' in primer classes. Some enthusiasts, including Cohen who was soon to become Chairman of the Board, wished to go further and establish pre-school departments down to the age of three as integral parts of larger schools.<sup>47</sup> Although clause 83 of the Education Act authorised school committees to enrol children under five years of age if they wished, the major financial difficulty was that after 1880, the government refused to pay capitation grants for infant pupils. In earlier years there had been a substantial consensus that infants derived little educational benefit from being enrolled in the schools, but now that there were greater opportunities for enlightened teaching in junior classes, public opinion began to change.

By 1895, Cohen and at least one of the Board's inspectors, were encouraging committees and teachers to become interested in using kindergarten methods with regular infant classes. In April of that year, the Kaikorai School Committee noted with satisfaction that several Dunedin school mistresses had recently visited the school to observe the kindergarten work of one of its teachers. Two months later, the Arthur Street School Committee announced that it was prepared to

establish a kindergarten department, attached to the school but catering specifically for children between the ages of three and five years.<sup>48</sup> But whether committees wished simply to provide the equipment and furniture necessary for Froebelian teaching, or whether they wished to go further and establish separate pre-school classes, they were inevitably faced with the problem of cost. The Caversham School Committee ruled against the introduction of kindergarten teaching for this reason. Furthermore, after a heated debate in June 1895, the Dunedin Conference resolved 'That this Conference is of the opinion that it is not advisable for kindergarten work to be introduced into the public schools by school committees at their expense'.<sup>49</sup> The weight of committee opinion was clear. While not being uninterested in fostering better kinds of infant schooling, the majority of school committees in Dunedin did not see that they should be called upon to finance such developments from their own limited sources.

The Board was in a similar dilemma. In August 1895, it joined other Boards in urging the government to amend its regulations in order to allow capitation payments on children under five years of age,<sup>50</sup> but the overture was unsuccessful. In the following year, the Board was able to make a small increase in committee allowances which afforded some assistance to those schools displaying a strong interest in kindergarten work. Nevertheless, all were agreed that too little was being done too slowly. A further major issue was raised in July 1896 when Mr Allnut, a well-known Dunedin teacher, delivered a paper to the Dunedin Conference entitled 'The Kindergarten in our Public Schools'.<sup>51</sup> After pointing out that Froebelian teaching needed proper equipment and small classes, Allnut went on to stress that the introduction of kindergarten work required first and foremost that infant teachers be properly trained. This was also the conclusion reached by a special committee set up by the Board to consider the kindergarten system in relation to Otago's schools. Accordingly, the Board decided in February 1897 to see what it could do to engage the services of a 'fully-trained kindergarten teacher from the United States'.<sup>52</sup> There was general agreement that the appointment of such a person would produce a greater long-term benefit than would the practice of supplying pieces of equipment to inadequately prepared teachers.

In a letter sent to three Americans who were leading authorities in kindergarten work, the Board stipulated the qualities it required of an appointee. It was planned that the person selected would work in a Kindergarten Department to be established within the Training College, her major task being to instruct women teachers in the Otago district in proper infant methods. She needed to be young, to possess proven capability as a kindergartener and to demonstrate moral fibre and enthusiasm for her work. The Board was not especially concerned

about where such a person had acquired her qualifications, but it did require a good teacher. The recipients of the Board's confidence were urged to do what they could to encourage a young woman with these qualifications to come to the Colony.<sup>53</sup>

At this point, however, the Board's enthusiasm appears to have outrun its financial capacity.<sup>54</sup> There is no record of a kindergartener being appointed and there was no further official correspondence on the matter. In 1898, the Principal of the Training College reported that lectures were being given in kindergarten method,<sup>55</sup> but the whole subject of infant teaching was rarely discussed by the Board after June 1897. There could be no doubt that the Board's specific endeavours to promote kindergarten work disappointed enthusiasts as well as itself. On the other hand, it was also clear that the interest shown in infant teaching by several members was not without profit because it helped to create a climate of opinion that welcomed Hogben's syllabus reforms after 1900. Hogben, himself, drew a close link between kindergarten philosophy and wider school reform, when he wrote in his first report in 1899: 'If our pupils are taught by direct observation of things, and if at the same time their constructive and creative activities are called into play, the different parts of their education are truly co-ordinated, because the various subjects of instruction are all, in a real sense, co-ordinated with nature .... The principle of natural co-ordination is in reality an extension of the ideas of Froebel as exemplified in the best kindergartens. The same principle can be applied throughout all education, not only in the infant classes but also in the higher stages of primary education in secondary, and even in university education.'<sup>56</sup> Thus, the new Inspector-General endorsed the views of several Board members who as early as 1896, had become convinced that the introduction of the kindergarten system would be a most effective way of liberalising the standard pass regulations in the more senior classes.

The Board continued to press hard for further liberalisation of the standard pass in the regular primary schools. In January 1895, Cohen sharply criticised the inspectors' failure at their national conference in the previous year to press for the abolition of all external examinations in the primary schools.<sup>57</sup> His sentiment was supported by the Board in April 1895, when it resolved by a majority of seven to two 'That in the opinion of the Board, the system of individual examination for passes is mischievous and should be abolished'.<sup>58</sup> At this stage, however, the Board appeared to be leading rather than following informed opinion. The resolution [moved by MacGregor] was opposed by the minority of members who argued that the public had a right to know whether or not the work being done in the school was up to standard. This was also the view of the *Otago Daily Times* which declared firmly that 'examinations have their place'.<sup>59</sup> Neither the inspectors nor the teachers as a group provided strong support for the

Board's stand, and Habens did not even bother to reply when the resolution was forwarded to the Department.

In 1896, however, the Board was forced to delegate the task of classifying pupils to a number of its teachers. Through an unavoidable shortage of inspectors, more than 40 schools were not examined in 1895. The teachers in these schools were therefore instructed to proceed with their own classifications for the 1896 school year.<sup>60</sup> Encouraged by this turn of events, MacGregor proposed yet again to petition for reforms in the examination system. In June 1896, he moved that the Board instruct its inspectors to allow teachers to promote children to higher classes without waiting for the results of the inspector's examination. He further proposed that the inspectors be authorised to 'pass' children on a qualitative assessment of their overall performance.<sup>61</sup> This time, the Board was unanimous in its support, but the inspectors believed that neither the Department nor employers nor the general public would look with favour upon a local interpretation of national regulations.<sup>62</sup> This was certainly the view of Habens and Walker who ruled in response to the Board's resolutions that 'the Education Act requires individual examination by standards and that a standard that could be altered by an inspector and teacher to suit individual cases would really be no standard'.<sup>63</sup> Although the Board made the rejoinder that the clauses of the Act said nothing about requiring 'individual examination by standards'<sup>64</sup> it was forced to concede that no reform could take place without the approval of the government. The proposed instructions to the inspectors were not implemented.

The Board could do little except wait until, in Cohen's words, 'the public at large and the parents insist upon complete freedom of classification for teachers'.<sup>65</sup> In the next two years, the official teachers' organisations in the province called more strongly for examination reform, while in 1898, the inspectors announced that they had now come to the unanimous conclusion that 'so far as the Otago district is concerned the standard pass might with great advantage to real education be abolished'.<sup>66</sup> When it was finally learned in 1899 that the new Inspector-General was interested in revising the existing examination procedures, the Board wasted no time in pressing the case once more. At the Board meeting in May of that year, MacGregor provided his colleagues with a lengthy and sophisticated analysis of the educational weaknesses of the current regulations. He then moved: (1) That in the opinion of the Board the system of individual passes should be abolished. (2) That this Board is of opinion that the system of standards be abolished.<sup>67</sup>

Press comment and school committees now strongly supported the resolutions. On the Board, there was less conviction that reform should encompass a complete abolition of the standards system, but in June 1899, both

resolutions were passed and forwarded to the Department of Education.<sup>68</sup> In July, a conference called by education boards voted overwhelmingly to urge the government to abolish the standard pass. In August, the regulations relating to the standard pass below standard six were at long last abolished. For Hogben, this was one reform which he did not have to work hard to initiate; for the Board, it was a case of persistence winning the day.

Until this date, however, the Board was forced to be content, as it had been in the past, to try to promote educational improvements within a framework circumscribed by national regulations. Although it was generally agreed that the abolition of individual passes in junior standards after 1894 raised the quality of education provided for these pupils, the familiar features of large classes, an overburdened syllabus, and the premium placed upon measured attainment, continued to impede development. In general, teachers remained convinced that it was better to risk overworking their pupils than to face almost certain public condemnation if the pass rates were poor,<sup>69</sup> and cases of teachers trying to 'beat the system' through examination prompting or other forms of falsification, still occurred with monotonous regularity. As in earlier years, the Board attempted to check the worst abuses and to encourage better teaching, but there was a limit to what it could achieve.

The 'keeping in' problem was a good example. In March 1895, the Board informed all teachers that: 'The Board regrets exceedingly that some teachers have disregarded the Board's circular 9 issued in 1893 re detaining children in school after school hours and expresses the hope that the practice will be at once discontinued or the Board will require to take more stringent measures to enforce its resolution.'<sup>70</sup> The threat was ineffective because in December of that same year, the Board again felt compelled to issue a general warning to its teachers.<sup>71</sup> As late as 1899, however, complaints were still being made that 'pupils were kept at their lessons until four o'clock in the afternoon as a matter of course',<sup>72</sup> and by that date it had become clear that apart from writing to individual teachers, the Board was not prepared to take substantial action. The difficulty it faced was obvious. In view of the fact that the Board exercised no significant control over syllabus requirements, members were reluctant to impose regulations which could be held to militate against pupils' progress. As a result, admonition against excessive hours of schooling was as far as the Board was prepared to go.

The case with complaints about excessive homework was the same. The Board had made its attitude plain on the matter in earlier years, but members were still not convinced that the syllabus requirements were so reasonable that little homework needed to be set. They therefore found it expedient, although less than satisfactory, to express general disapproval and to pass specific complaints to the notice of the school committees and headmasters concerned. Again, it was

not to be doubted that the Board's failure to take more effective action resulted directly from its lack of autonomy as an educational authority. As long as it was a fact that the Board had no final control over the system of evaluation, members could not rely on the public or the teachers supporting regulations seen in any way to militate against examination success.

This was the rock upon which the Board's first real attempt to control the use of corporal punishment foundered. In July 1896, the Palmerston District High School Committee complained that the Board's existing regulations on the use of corporal punishment were so vague that it was impossible for the Committee to prevent excessive punishments being administered in its school. The Board thereupon decided to draw up more precise regulations, but before these were promulgated, a controversial meeting of the Dunedin Conference made it clear that there was a strong case for firm action to be taken. Delegates vied with one another to produce horror stories of punishments being administered in large classes in the city schools. Several speakers heatedly defended the Biblical injunction against sparing the rod, only to have their case swept away by a headmaster [present by invitation] who blithely informed the meeting that it was necessary for him to delegate power of punishment to his staff. Had he not done so, his whole day would have been occupied with going from room to room to administer the strap. The meeting finally resolved: 'That this Conference is strongly of opinion that corporal punishment other than on the hand should not be inflicted except in an extreme case, and then only by the headmaster; and that in the case of girls no corporal punishment whatever should be inflicted unless under very exceptional circumstances by the headmaster.'<sup>73</sup>

There was no strong public suggestion that all corporal punishment should be abolished. What seemed to be desired was moderation, and the Board's new regulations circularised in September 1896,<sup>74</sup> were an attempt to enforce restraint. Principally, the regulations stipulated the type of strap permitted, prohibited the punishment of girls in the presence of boys, divided punishments into major [more than three strokes] and minor categories, and required that all major punishments together with a description of the offence be recorded in a punishment register *before* being inflicted. Many school committees and prominent teachers were less than enthusiastic when the regulations were publicized.<sup>75</sup> They considered that in the context of crowded classrooms and the stern necessity to prepare for examinations, the regulations would not only prove to be unworkable but might also have the effect of destroying discipline in the schools. Moreover, many teachers believed that it was totally unrealistic to expect them to make a detailed entry in a punishment register every time they wished to inflict a 'major' punishment. It therefore remained to be seen, whether the Board would

have the strength to enforce the punishment regulations or whether, like its rulings on homework and school hours, the regulations would merely symbolise general aspiration.

The test came in May 1897, when a teacher at the Albany Street School was found guilty of inflicting a major punishment upon a girl, in front of the class as a whole. He had not made an entry in the punishment register, and to compound his guilt still further, the strap which he had used did not conform to the Board's requirements.<sup>76</sup> There could be no doubt that the teacher had breached the regulations in every possible way. Nevertheless, the school committee was more than lenient because in the first place the teacher was charged with the task of instructing a class of over ninety pupils, and in the second place he had one of the best examination pass rates in the Otago district. It was clear, therefore, that when it came to the point, the public subordinated its conscience about corporal punishment to the premium it placed upon examination success. Nor did the Board feel able to stand out against the committee's judgment. Having little control over the criterion of 'success', the Board contented itself with passing a motion of censure on the teacher. Thereafter, the corporal punishment regulations were virtually a dead letter, a fact that was finally recognised by the Board when it rescinded the entire regulations in March 1899.<sup>77</sup>

It was the inspector who continued to act as the supreme arbiter of 'success', thus indirectly justifying practices like corporal punishment. As already noted, Otago's Inspectors became less and less enamoured with the standard pass regulations, but their change in attitude was tempered with caution. In February 1895, they attempted to go some of the way to meet with the Board's desire to see a more liberal examining policy, implemented. In a special report to the Board, the inspectors suggested that the practice of requiring a written report on an 'inspection' [as opposed to 'examination'] visit to a school be abandoned.<sup>78</sup> In their view, the confidence of teachers would benefit from less reporting and they also claimed that inspectors would be able to give more time to demonstrating teaching techniques if they were freed from the burden of having to write reports. The Board, being most impressed with this apparent change of heart on the part of its officers, hastened to comply with their recommendation. It was a hopeful sign, but the Board was under no illusion that such measures could be anything but palliatives until more real responsibility was granted to teachers.

The inspectors, however, remained harder to convince than the Board that teachers should be entrusted with more discretion to evaluate the progress of their pupils. At first, they were dubious even about allowing freedom of classification in

standards one and two. Although the inspectors reported favourably on this innovation in 1895, it came to the notice of the Board in November of that year that the inspectors were re-examining these classes in order to satisfy themselves that the work load been done properly. According to hearsay reports, the children in the junior standards were now being subjected in effect to two major examinations instead of one, as prior to 1895. Cohen, then Chairman of the Board, wrote stiffly to the inspectors about the issue: 'Gentlemen—I would call your attention to the reports of the speeches made at the last meeting of the Education Board. When speaking to the resolutions re examinations of standards one and two, the Hon. J. MacGregor and Mr Ramsay made specific assertions that it was your practice, after the headteacher had examined the pupils of those standards, to subject them to a 'rigid examination'. I promised I would obtain from you a report of the actual practice which you follow on such occasions. I shall be glad if you will ... supply me with any remarks you may feel called upon to make in explanation of this matter.'<sup>79</sup> The inspectors' rejoinder, however, was that they were acting within the letter of the regulations, and this, the Board could not deny.

In time, the Board's officers came to see the matter in the same light as the liberal minded members on the Board. In 1897, the inspectors doubted that the routine cycle of annual examinations was worth the deplorable effects that it had upon the quality of education provided in the classrooms. In the following year they were unanimously of the view that the standard pass examinations should be abolished, and they gave full support to the Board's resolution to this effect in 1899. The *Otago Daily Times*, noting their change in attitude, wrote: 'The fact that the Inspectors have weighed the standards in the balance and found them wanting should at least shake the confidence of the public, who have come to look upon our State school system as well-nigh perfect ... All true friends of education now feel that if the millstone of pass-grinding were removed from the teachers' necks, education would rise to a higher plane, and far more enduring work would be done in the public schools throughout the Colony.'<sup>80</sup> Of this judgment it could fairly be said that the majority of the public's representatives on the Board hardly needed to have their confidence shaken. The views of 'officialdom' had finally caught up with 'lay' opinion which had been expressed decisively as early as 1895.

The inspectors' change of heart was assisted by a series of events, some of which resulted from specific decisions by the Board. Petrie's successor, W. S. Fitzgerald, was not a forceful person, but he was more sensitive than his predecessor to changing views among the public and teachers. Moreover, in October 1895, William Taylor died suddenly, thus leaving Goyen as the only officer who felt it occasionally necessary to defend the past policies of the



inspectorate. After Taylor's death, the Board, belatedly deciding that its inspectors were overworked, appointed two extra local men on the understanding that henceforth the inspectors would give more time to demonstrating good teaching techniques and less to writing reports. Accordingly, the inspectors were freer to accept and promote change without feeling that they were likely to be charged with being inconsistent. For its part, the Board encouraged its officers to see themselves in an advisory, as much as an examining role.

On at least one occasion during this period, the Board made an important political and educational decision primarily with the hope that the decision would encourage the inspectors to be more flexible in their approach to their work. In January 1895, the boards were circularised by the Catholic Bishops asking that members authorise their inspectors to examine Catholic schools in their respective districts. Unlike the other major boards, the Otago Board agreed to comply with the request.<sup>81</sup> It did this not only because it accepted the justice of the Bishops' case but also because it firmly believed that its inspectors would derive considerable benefit from having to observe schools in which complete freedom of classification was necessarily granted to the teachers.<sup>82</sup> This was something that could not be provided by the state system, and although doubts were expressed about the wisdom of the Board's decision, the evidence suggests that the experience did nothing to check the trend towards liberalism in 'official' thinking.

The Board won fewer plaudits from teachers for some of its attempts to promote classroom reform through regulations. This was especially the case with the corporal punishment regulations which were regarded by many teachers as being an unwarranted interference with their professional discretion. The Board hoped that the restrictions that it placed on the teachers' freedom of action in specific procedures would be counterbalanced by the provision of greater overall professional autonomy in the classrooms. This was the logic of its continual agitation to abolish the standard pass. Since it was not successful in bringing about a modification of the pass regulations until 1899 however, the Board was never, in the period under review, able to afford teachers the degree of professional freedom and responsibility which it deemed desirable. Nevertheless, it did work actively to build up the image of a teacher as being an authoritative professional figure whose judgment could be relied upon in *lieu* of the examination mark.

This was not always easy, especially when the Board was faced with individual instances of waywardness and irresponsibility on the part of its employees. A wary eye was kept on the private behaviour of some teachers who threatened to bring the profession as a whole into disrepute. In 1898, for example, the Rector of the Balclutha District High School was informed: 'It has come to the

knowledge of the Board that you have been giving way to drink, and you are warned that if any such offence be proved against you hereafter, the Board will deal severely with you.’<sup>83</sup>

More difficult to adjudicate were cases of flagrant abuse of the increased professional discretion granted to teachers after 1894. The most notorious example of this occurred at the Waipori School in 1897. There, the teacher, motivated by a personal grudge, refused to pass three children from standard two to standard three in spite of the fact that the inspector ruled that the children’s work was acceptable.<sup>84</sup> Although the Board tried to persuade the teacher to change his mind, he stood his ground, claiming that under the regulations of 1894 the responsibility to pass children in the junior standards was his and his alone. Eventually, the Board, after recording its view that the teacher had made an error in professional judgment, conceded the case. It was clear that members preferred not to let individual instances of irresponsibility impair the growth of community trust in teachers as a whole.

A similar problem arose with respect to the participation of teachers in politics. During these years when the fervour surrounding the issue of ‘prohibition’ reached its height, it was found in rural districts especially, that teachers often had decided public views about ‘drink’ which were not appreciated within the communities where they worked. As complaints about teachers taking an active part in prohibition campaigns flooded into the Board in 1896, serious attention had to be given to deciding whether individual zeal should be permitted to place the public reputation of the profession at a discount. Although it was sensitive of the danger of interfering with the civil liberties of the individual, the Board finally concluded that the image of the teaching profession was the more important consideration. In December 1896, it circularised all teachers with its ruling on the matter: ‘In view of the necessity of promoting the harmony between teachers and their committees and the people of the district generally, and of the detriment to the interests of education that is likely to arise from misunderstandings and dissensions in the district, the Board enjoins its teachers to refrain as far as possible from taking part actively and publicly in political affairs, in the election of school committees, or in any other local matters, participation in which is likely to bring teachers into conflict with any section of the community. Wilful disregard of this regulation will be deemed a serious offence.’<sup>85</sup> The regulation, although it was the subject of protest from many school committees and some teachers, appears to have served its main purpose of persuading teachers to be more cautious of openly involving themselves in political controversy. During this period the issue did not arise again, the Board not therefore being called upon to put the dubious legality of its ruling to the test.

More positively, the Board continued to do what it could to strengthen the professional standing of teachers by providing for their effective professional training. Financial difficulties had forced the Board to close the regular Training College in December 1894. In January 1895, however, the Board decided that an attempt should be made to continue teacher training on a more modest scale. After a meeting at which all the headmasters of the city schools and the inspectors commented favourably on the Board's proposal,<sup>86</sup> the College was reopened in March under the control of David White who now became headmaster of the Normal School and Principal of the Training College.<sup>87</sup> Although the College, as reconstituted, was a more modest venture than its predecessors,<sup>88</sup> it seems doubtful that the quality of teacher training suffered any marked decline. Evidence from reports and public documents suggests that White was a far more effective leader than Fitzgerald had been. It was also evident that the teachers in the city and suburban schools became much more closely associated with the work of the Training College than had been the case in the past.

The major problem was that teacher training remained grossly under capitalised. In 1895, the Board received a 'pleasant surprise'<sup>89</sup> when the government provided a small grant for teacher training purposes, but there was never sufficient money to promote the developments that many would have liked to see in this field. The Board's continued emphasis upon teacher training despite its slender financial resources, was a further illustration, if such were needed, of the confidence which it had consistently placed in professional training as a means of improving the quality of teaching.

The Board was also prepared to support other forms of professional growth which directly restricted its own powers of manoeuvre. In October 1895, Reeves successfully guided through the legislature a '*Public School Teachers Incorporation and Court of Appeal Act*', the effect of which was to allow teachers, through their professional organization, to obtain some recourse against arbitrary dismissal by education boards. Many Board members had long argued that legislation like this was desirable, and when MacGregor spoke in the Legislative Council, he claimed that the Bill was as necessary in Otago as it was in other parts of the country.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the Board also concurred with a more restrictive Act passed on the same subject in 1897. Clearly, by this date, the Board had come around firmly to the view that teachers should possess statutory rights to protect their interests, rights gained moreover at the expense of the boards and school committees.

It was therefore, unfortunate that between 1895 and 1899, relationships between the Otago Educational Institute and the Board were again marred by the Board's failure to devise a satisfactory appointments and promotion scheme. Early in 1895,

Cohen along with the majority of the Board, hoped that both the school committees and teachers could be persuaded to accept the grading system which had been outlined by Mr. Davidson. The Dunedin Conference was not completely antipathetic. It resolved: 'That this Conference expresses approval of the adoption of the scheme for the classification of teachers and for a minimum qualification of teachers for the various positions, but declines meanwhile, to express any opinion regarding the scheme under consideration.'<sup>91</sup>

The committees, nevertheless, remained wary of directly supporting the thesis that appointment and promotion should be determined by the highest grading mark. They were not happy either with the intention of Davidson's scheme to prevent first assistants in large schools from being appointed directly to the position of headmaster in such schools. But it was the teachers in the Institute who, having finally decided that they were opposed to both of the above propositions, succeeded in persuading the Board that a grading scheme which blocked the promotion of many ambitious teachers was not desirable. As a result, the Board settled on a compromise which it hoped would be acceptable to the school committees and the Institute.

In new appointment regulations promulgated in July 1895, positions were graded in degree of responsibility and qualifications required thereto. The Board was empowered to establish a special selection committee, the committee when making its recommendations for appointments being required to take into consideration such factors as teaching skill, literary qualifications, fitness for position, length of service with the Board, and past service 'in remote or out-of-the-way places'.<sup>92</sup> 'Consultation' with school committees was now to consist of the Board sending forward the names of selected candidates sorted into categories of 'most suitable' and 'suitable'. School committees were generally expected to recommend a candidate from the 'most suitable' category, but if they thought fit, they could make a case in writing for the appointment of a candidate from the lesser category.

Cohen, disgusted with the teachers' refusal to give their unqualified support for a grading scheme, publicly doubted whether the Board's new attempt to centralise appointments would be successful. His prediction was correct. Within six months, an influential school committee having successfully challenged the Board's categorisation of candidates, committees were agitating once more to remove the responsibility for appointment from the hands of 'Board officials and domineering members'.<sup>93</sup> In 1898, the Board finally agreed to send forward the names of all candidates, some of which would be marked by the Board as being 'most suitable'.<sup>94</sup> But the evidence suggests that appointments had reverted to the control of individual school committees well before that date. It was a familiar and sad tale. Without receiving the strong support of the teachers, the Board was

as powerless as it had ever been to enforce its will on appointments against the political strength of the school committees.

Believing that the Institute had got what it deserved, individual Board members now had little sympathy with complaints from local teachers about parochialism in appointments. They were, however, sensitive to the fact that one effect of the 1895 regulations was to discriminate further against applicants from outside the province. On occasions, the Board attempted to argue in rather hollow fashion that where other things were equal, such candidates received fair consideration.<sup>95</sup> But in practice, it had no real answer to the charge that it followed the Scottish principle of 'keeping its ain fish guts for its ain sea mews'.<sup>96</sup> As in earlier years, the Board as a provincial authority, was not able to make any worthwhile contribution to the need to provide an efficient national distribution of teaching resources.

In retrospect, it seems that nothing could have been more frustrating and lacking in profit than the exorbitant amount of time that the Board devoted to its fruitless attempts to improve the appointments system in Otago. Not only did the issue bring the Board into constant conflict with teachers and committees but it also served to show once more the extent to which the Board was restricted by committee parochialism. The one redeeming feature was a growing realisation that the best way out of the tangle of appointments was to introduce a national grading scheme allowing reasonable avenues of promotion for all teachers. Davidson's scheme was rejected by the senior members of the Institute largely because the number of senior positions in Otago was too few to allow this to occur. One Board member pinpointed this weakness by remarking that, 'If Mr Cohen and Mr Habens could only be brought into contact with the matter, the scheme might be made a colonial one'.<sup>97</sup> What this change in attitude portended in the minds of some was perhaps best illustrated by Cohen who in earlier years had first placed his faith in strong school committee government, then in effective Board control, and finally, by 1897 in a Department that 'will take over the inspectors and act as a buffer between the deserving teachers and unscrupulous committees'.<sup>98</sup> The Board seemed to have exhausted the possibilities of doing something on its own to place appointments upon a more professional basis.

One effect of the frustration incurred by committee pressure on appointments was a decision by the Otago Institute to urge reforms in the electoral composition of the boards. As early as 1895, the Institute concluded that school committees, although they represented only a small proportion of the community, exercised far too great an influence on the policies of the Board. It resolved: 'That the election of members of the Board be placed on a more popular basis than at present'.<sup>99</sup> In the following year, the Board itself, while it was not prepared to go as far as the Institute had suggested, determined to press for reform of some of the

unsatisfactory aspects of board election procedure which had been criticised for many years. In March 1896, it resolved on the motion of Thomas McKenzie: 'That in the opinion of this Board the system provided by the Act for nominating and electing members to Boards of Education is highly objectionable, and this Board respectfully requests the Minister for Education to amend the Education Act in the direction of limiting the number of nominations necessary, and also for fixing one day on which all committees shall vote.'<sup>100</sup> At the same meeting, the Board also resolved that the Act should be changed to allow each individual committeeman to record a vote for Board candidates,<sup>101</sup> thus coming a little nearer to the position taken by the Educational Institute. The above resolutions were transmitted to the Department,<sup>102</sup> the Board making it clear in subsequent correspondence that it regarded the reforms as being a matter of urgency.<sup>103</sup>

The Board also took the unusual step of inviting all school committees in the province to comment upon its resolutions. When the returns of committee opinion were forwarded to Wellington in July, it was clear that of the 106 committees replying, the great majority favoured voting for the Board on one fixed day at a date to be set by the Board. A small majority were in sympathy with the proposal to allow committeemen to record individual votes, but a decided majority of the committees were against the Board's suggestion that the number of nominations required from each committee by the Act should be reduced.<sup>104</sup>

Up to that point, however, the Board had eased around the question of 'popular voting' which had been raised by the Institute. Nor had it broached the topic of unequal representation between committees of small and large schools,<sup>105</sup> a matter of long standing complaint from the school committees in Dunedin. The latter issue came to the fore in August 1896, when it was learned that the government intended introducing an 'Election of Local Bodies Reform Bill' into parliament. The Bill incorporated some of the suggestions which the Board had earlier made to the Department, but it also provided that entire boards would be elected annually, each ward district being equivalent in terms of the number of schools represented. This was the government's answer to the claim that the education boards should be more electorally popular authorities.

With wards being planned on the basis of number of schools rather than number of pupils, the Dunedin Conference saw itself being placed at an even greater educational disadvantage and hastened to record its objection to this particular provision in the Bill.<sup>106</sup> The Board was also of the opinion 'That the proposal under the Bill to split up the Otago Education District into nine separate electorates is cumbersome, unsatisfactory and inequitable'.<sup>107</sup> The Bill did not proceed, but by this time a number of school committees in the province were

coming round to the view that a ward system should be devised, not on the basis of numbers of schools, but rather upon equivalence in terms of total population.

Furthermore, a few committees were now also prepared to endorse the concept of 'direct voting'. In September 1897, for example, the Macandrew Road School Committee lent its voice to a small but growing body of opinion, when it argued that the province should be divided into electoral districts on a population basis, with voting for Board members being undertaken directly by householders, and not school committees.<sup>108</sup> What was at issue here was something far more important than a remedy for several clumsy election practices. Argument in favour of the 'direct vote' involved nothing less than a claim that the existing administrative machinery no longer catered adequately for popular participation in educational decision-making. In 1899, moreover, the point was surprisingly conceded at the Education Boards Conference when Walker declared that 'bodies elected to do one thing should not have the power to elect someone else to do another'.<sup>109</sup>

The whole question of 'direct voting' was shaped by the presuppositions of administrators, teachers and the public, concerning the participation that each group should exercise in making decisions connected with the schools. By 1898, the NZEI was prepared to argue strongly that excessive public control through the local machinery of school committees and education boards was the biggest obstacle in the way of improving the quality of education the schools.<sup>110</sup> The teachers believed that reforms in need of most urgent attention were a better financing system, centralised inspection, revised curricula, centralised teacher training, a national salary scale, and a national system of appointments and promotion freed from the whims of local prejudice. They readily conceded that most, if not all, of these objectives would have to be gained at the expense of local autonomy, but in the Institute's view, the demands for national equity and educational progress were sufficient justification for that price to be paid. Moreover, the inability of the boards to undertake sustained educational reforms had come to loom large in teachers' thinking. They did not, as a group, have a high opinion of the competence of school committees and education boards to act authoritatively on 'professional' matters. As their definition of 'professional' widened to encompass more and more of the daily affairs associated with running the schools, some teachers concluded that the case for public participation in education could best be met by the creation of a group of 'expert' laymen charged with the duty of advising the Department and the government when called upon to do so.<sup>111</sup>

As might have been expected, public reaction to these propositions was anything but enthusiastic. Generally speaking, there was a reluctance to entertain the idea of handing the education system over to the complete care of

teachers and professional administrators. The charge was made that if teachers had their way, they would allow their affectation and feelings of superiority to kill all public interest in the schools.<sup>112</sup> Yet the essence of the teachers' case for increased centralisation was hard to dismiss. The Otago Board was one authority which had long discovered that it lacked the capacity to undertake needed reforms in a satisfying manner. For the most part too, it would still have lacked this capacity had it been a more popularly elected authority.<sup>113</sup> Although it hesitated to argue the matter out to the extremes suggested by Institute spokesmen, the logic of many of the Board's recommendations after 1895 also pointed in the direction of increased centralisation. The 1877 Act was now clearly dissonant with the national need for educational reform. Somehow, the traditional desire to retain 'a people's education system' against exclusive professional expertise, had to be accommodated to this fact.

It is interesting that Walker put forward a distinct alternative to much of the thinking revealed in these years by the NZEI and the Otago Board, among others. In 1899, the Minister argued that the way to reform should lie in giving the boards more power of discretion rather than less.<sup>114</sup> While it was true that his remarks were made in the context of technical education, Walker's thesis was not without plausibility, especially if it were linked to the demands for more popularly elected educational authorities. The case for more centralisation in finance, professional liaison, and appointments and promotions, was unquestionably strong. On the other hand, it was clearly a fact that after 1887, an authority like the Otago Board more often failed to be effective because it had too little power of initiative, than because it used its existing powers unwisely.

Nevertheless, after 1895, the Board adopted an attitude towards centralisation which was cautious, but which indicated that it would not be adverse to more power of initiative being granted to the Department where this could be shown to be justified on educational grounds. This is not to say that the Board had shed all the weaknesses of parochialism with which it had been invested throughout its history. Indeed, local interest was often its driving force, but by 1900, the Board had come to see that in matters such as appointments, it was no longer an asset. By the turn of the century therefore, the Board, while it was still anxious to retain its provincial identity, was ready to participate in administrative reform as well as educational development. It was certainly markedly different in its outlook from the Otago Board which had first met under the new Act in 1878, a Board which after glancing at the national scene with a Roman eye, had imperiously asked, 'Who is this Mr Habens?'



## NOTES

1. Sinclair, *William Pember Reeves op.cit. p.301*
2. ODT 27 Apr 1897
3. *Ibid* 28 Nov 1895
4. William Pember Reeves Papers 1895-1908 F 168 Cohen/Reeves 9 Oct 1897
5. ODT 14 Nov 1895
6. *Ibid* 5 May 1897
7. OEB Report 1898 p.6
8. ODT 13 June 1896
9. OEB Report 1899 p.6
10. *Ibid* p.11
11. OEB LB 43 1896/7 pp. 88-89
12. OEB Circular Book 30/4/96
13. OEB LB 41 1894/5 Pryde/Const. Christie, Balclutha 22 Mar 1895 p.551
14. OEB Report 1899 p.6
15. OEB LB 43 1896/7 Pryde/Mother Superior, Dunedin Convent 17 June 1896 p.134
16. *Ibid* 44 1897 Pryde/R.Paterson, Balclutha 4 Oct 1897 p.875
17. *Ibid* 45 1897/8 Pryde/Miss Marchant 25 Nov 1897 p.54
18. E-Reports were the annual reports of the NZ Dept. of Education located in Wellington. They were published in the *Appendices to the Journals of the New Zealand House of Representatives* [ AJHR]
19. ODT 4 June 1898
20. OEB Report 1895 App E p.36
21. OEB LB 44 1897 Pryde/Hawkes Bay Edn Board 30 July 1897 p.667
22. ODT 15 Sep 1896
23. *Ibid* 23 Sep 1896
24. *Ibid* 15 Aug 1898 Speech by the Rector Otago Boys' High School: 'The Board's policy is nothing more than underselling the wares of the High Schools'.
25. OEB Circular Book 9 Aug 1895
26. ODT 14 July 1898
27. *Ibid*
28. *Ibid* 20 Oct 1899
29. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 26 Mar 1895
30. ODT 17 May 1895
31. *Ibid* 10 Aug 1895
32. *Ibid* 27 Apr & 8 June 1895
33. *Ibid* 10 Aug 1895
34. *Ibid* 17 Oct 1895
35. *Ibid* 15 Nov 1895

36. Under the Act the education boards had the first right to decide whether they wished to establish classes in technical instruction. If they did not exercise their option other voluntary bodies could then apply for support for classes they conducted.
37. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 4 Dec 1895 p.209
38. This grant was received by the Tokomairiro District High Sch under the category of 'technical instruction'.
39. OEB LB 45 1897/8 Pryde/J.Reed, Auckland 29 Apr 1898 p.807
40. *Ibid*
41. ODT 21 Jan 1897
42. OEB LB Gov 4 Cohen/Walker 8 Feb 1897 pp.382-383
43. *Ibid* 44 1897 Pryde/G.Thompson 7 May 1897 p.356
44. *Ibid* Gov 4 Pryde/ Habens 21 Sep 1897 p.493
45. ODT 12 Nov 1897
46. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 18 Jan 1898 p.547
47. Reeves Papers F.168 Cohen/Reeves 29 Jan 1897
48. ODT 6 June 1895
49. *Ibid* 19 June 1895
50. OEB Circular Book 9 Aug 1895
51. ODT 11 July 1896
52. *Ibid* 19 Feb 1897
53. OEB LB 44 1897 Pryde/Prof. McGrew, San Jose. 20 Mar 1897 pp.160-161
54. Alternatively, the position may not have attracted applicants.
55. OEB Report 1896 p.68
56. AJHR 1899 Vol 2 E-1 p.17
57. ODT 18 Jan 1895
58. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 23 Apr 1895 p.142
59. ODT 2 Apr 1895
60. OEB LB 42 1895/6 Pryde/Headmaster, Tahatika Sch 9 Jan 1896 p.493
61. *Ibid* Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 15 June 1896 p.276
62. ODT 13 June 1896
63. *Ibid* 20 Aug 1896
64. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 22 Aug 1896 p.325
65. ODT 13 June 1896
66. OEB Report 1898 App E p.58
67. ODT 19 May 1899
68. OEB LB Gov 5 Pryde/Minister of Edn 28 June 1899
69. ODT 4 May 1896
70. OEB Circular Book 19/95 27 Mar 1895
71. ODT 13 Dec 1895
72. *Ibid* 22 Sep 1899
73. *Ibid* 1 Aug 1896
74. OEB Circular Book 16/96 19 Sep 1896
75. ODT 8,9,11,13 Oct 1896
76. OEB LB 44 1897 Borrie/J. Ferguson 19 May 1897 p.381

77. OEB Circular Book 6/99 20 Mar 1899
78. ODT 23 Feb 1895
79. OEB LB 43 1896/7 Cohen/Inspectors 2 Dec 1896 p.711
80. ODT 16 May 1899
81. OEB LB 41 1894/5 Pryde/Redmond 18 Jan 1895 p.313
82. ODT 18 Jan 1895
83. OEB LB 45 1897/8 Pryde/W.McElrea 22 Jan 1898 p.282
84. *Ibid* 45 1897/8 Goyen/Mrs Blackmore 23 Dec 1897 p.182
85. OEB Circular Book 2/97 18 Jan 1897
86. OEB LB 41 1894/5 Pryde/Milne 7 Feb 1895 p.373
87. *Ibid* 41 1894/5 Pryde/White 11 Mar 1895 p.497
88. OEB Circular Book 8/95 11 Mar 1895
89. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 3 May 1895 p.154
90. M.J.C.Rutherford, The Teachers' Appeal Act, Unpublished Diploma study University of Otago 1972 p.14
91. ODT 13 Feb 1895
92. Regulation 23
93. ODT 12 Sep 1896
94. *Ibid* 17 June 1898
95. OEB LB 43 1896/7 Cohen/W.Clark, Invercargill 10 July 1896 p.183
96. ODT 30 Jan 1897
97. *Ibid* 20 July 1895
98. Reeves Papers F 168 Cohen/reeves 29 Jan 1897
99. ODT 12 July 1895
100. *Ibid* 20 Mar 1896
101. The current practice was for committees to cast their votes as a whole, thus giving less room for minority opinion to exert a voice and making board elections even more secretive affairs than they need have been. The whole concept of committee voting seems to have been consistent with the fear in 1877 that more democratic elections would have resulted in the 'wrong kind' of people being elected.
102. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/ Habens 24 Mar 1896 pp.250-251
103. *Ibid* Gov 4 Pryde/Habens 1 Aug 1896 pp.314-315
104. *Ibid* Gov 4 Pryde/Minister of Education 17 July 1896 p.304
105. The Dunedin Conference kept up the complaint of the defunct Dunedin Schools Committee that although over one third of the children in the province attended the sixteen schools it represented, the committee could easily be outvoted by the other 122 committees in Board elections.
106. ODT 1 Aug 1896
107. OEB LB Gov 4 Pryde/Minister of Education 22 Aug 1896 p.324
108. ODT 7 Sep 1897
109. AJHR 1899 Vol 2 E-1c p.8
110. ODT 5 Jan 1898 Presidential Address, W.Davidson

- 111. *Ibid*
- 112. *Ibid* 6 Jan 1898
- 113. Although possibly it would have worked out a much better solution to the appointments quarrels.
- 114. ODT 5 Jan 1899

## ***Chapter 8***

### ***The Board in retrospect 1877-1899***

This study makes it clear that the function and the policy of the Otago Education Board changed significantly during the years under review. At first the Board was expected to promote a sense of continuity between the former provincial education system and the new procedures for nationally financed schooling which were introduced by the 1877 Act. The Act, itself, especially with its financing provisions and its placement of the inspectors under the Board's control, encouraged both Board members and the public to believe that no radical alterations needed to be made to the schools which the province had hitherto provided from its own resources. Before 1880, in fact, the Board was commonly expected to promote the development of provincial schooling facilities irrespective of national considerations.

Events in the province's schools and educational administration immediately after January 1878 assisted the Board to maintain continuity between the old and the new. No significant changes took place in the Board's professional staff and the recruitment of teachers from beyond the province continued to be very selective. Few senior teachers left Otago to take advantage of the new professional opportunities created by the 1877 Act because the Board's strong financial position enabled it to continue to pay its servants salaries that were substantially higher on average than those pertaining elsewhere. Even the composition of the Board's membership remained unaffected by the introduction of national, as opposed to provincial, education. Some anxiety was felt concerning the danger of irresponsible choice by the Board's new electoral masters, the school committees, but after the first election in 1878 it was clear that the school committees were interested to ensure that the men who gained seats on the Board possessed either a record of service on the provincial education board or a proven reputation in public affairs, or both.

In the early years of the period under review, the Board's members saw their task to lie first in using their political influence in Wellington to gain all the money they could for public education in the province, second in building and maintaining schools where they were required, and third in acting as a general referee in matters of dispute arising between school committees and teachers, or teachers and parents. It was upon these matters, rather than upon issues

associated with teaching methods or the content of school curricula, that the Board's members preferred initially to concentrate their energies. Thus, for the first several years of its existence, the newly-constituted Board was busily engaged in designing an extensive building programme to cope with the rapid increases in roll numbers which occurred after the introduction of free education in 1878. In the process the Board made one decision of major importance when it decided first to concentrate upon building large schools in the city before trying to satisfy the claims of many outlying districts for the establishment of small schools. This priority, a priority agreed upon by a Board containing a majority of rural representatives in its membership, was destined to be of financial benefit to education in the province for most of the period reviewed in this study.

Under the new Act, the school committees lost the financial independence which they had possessed through fee income during the provincial period. In the larger urban areas especially, committees were sensitive to the fact that they were now dependent upon the Board for their regular income, which also came under full audit control in 1883. Moreover, after retrenchment occurred in 1880 and the committees were forced to resort increasingly to voluntary fund raising, those committees which controlled more than one school were placed at a distinct disadvantage. Thus in 1883, the Dunedin Schools Committee, the largest and most noteworthy multi-school committee in Otago, was abolished because it became evident that under the provisions of the Education Act there was no real place for a large authority which had few powers of discretion and which was too remote from individual schools to act successfully as a fund-raising body. Accordingly, after 1883, the centralisation of the Board as a regional administrative authority was virtually complete.

This consolidation of administrative authority, a consolidation guaranteed in fact by the nature of the Act, placed far greater power in the hands of Board officers [notably the Secretary] than had been the case in the provincial system. It was not a development that was welcomed by the school committees, and the Board, itself, was ambivalent in its attitude towards its officials. In general, the Board supported Pryde's attempts to oversee committee expenditure but it remained suspicious that the Secretary might be tempted to undermine the Board's status by taking too much authority into his own hands. The matter came to a head over the all-important question of teacher appointments and dismissals. Although proponents of the 1877 Act had promised that the system of a national classification of teachers introduced under the Act would improve appointment and promotion procedures, the Board made it clear as early as 1879 that it did not believe that the classification attained by an individual teacher should be the major criterion for appointment. Instead, the Board's officials lent their energies

to devising a system of provincial appointments and promotions that would be conducted under the aegis primarily of the inspectors and the Secretary.

While the teachers were not particularly enthusiastic about what the Board's officials had in mind, the more militant school committees were openly irate. Committeemen, with their long tradition of considerable control over teacher appointments in Otago, sought jealously to preserve one of the few major powers granted them in the Act. The committees indicated that they were prepared to use their electoral strength to force the Board to consult with them seriously over appointments, and the Board itself, after the Farnie Case in 1882, decided that an appointments system dominated by officials would be unwise. Thereafter, for many years the effective responsibility for selecting teachers reverted to the school committees, committeemen in fact exercising a greater control over selection than had been the case in the latter years of the Provincial system.

The Farnie Case also revealed the uneasy relationship that had developed between the Board and the teachers' organisation, the Otago Educational Institute. Although the Board maintained the formal support which had been accorded to professional development in Otago's provincial days, the Board's members were alarmed when the teachers showed signs of using their organisation for political purposes that threatened to come into conflict with the authority of the Board. The Board's attitude towards the ideal of 'professional responsibility' was also ambivalent. On the one hand the Board continued the provincial tradition of encouraging professional training and the attainment of professional qualifications, while on the other hand it sought to ensure that all teachers were kept up to the mark through the requirements exacted by the inspectors in the 'standards' examinations.

The latter decision was in keeping with the Board's initial desire to avoid concerning itself unduly with professional matters. The Board was content to leave specialised educational criticism to the inspectors who were required to examine the schools and the teachers in the light of the national syllabus prescriptions first imposed by the central Education Department in 1878. Yet the 'standards' examinations were the subject of some misgivings from their inception. The concept of 'standards', which had been introduced into Otago's schools in 1874, had satisfied the demands of many for greater uniformity among the schools but the examinations had given rise to serious problems concerning the quality of instruction. These problems had not been resolved by the time the national system of education was established. At first, Habens' new national syllabus was criticized by inspectors and teachers alike on points of detail but the Board did nothing to assist Habens to form a closer liaison with the inspectors and teachers in the district in order that differences in professional opinion might

be ironed out. In the Board's view there was a danger that the price for greater professional liaison might well be a diminution of its autonomy as a regional administrative authority.

The practical difficulties that resulted from the phenomenon of divided professional responsibility<sup>1</sup> become apparent to the interested public in the province by 1880. Outspoken school committees began to object strongly to the 'driving' in the classrooms that was consequent upon teachers endeavouring to overtake unrealistic syllabus requirements. No interested group however, least of all the Board, considered itself to be responsible for initiating action designed to remedy the deficiencies in educational practices which were becoming increasingly obvious. The Education Act, itself, with its emphasis upon 'checks and balances' was not designed to encourage educational reappraisal and change. Nevertheless, by 1883 the Board at last agreed that in the interests of educational progress there was a need for closer liaison between the Department and the inspectors and for revised procedures for evaluating the work of the schools. Unfortunately the Board's failure to devise a suitable appointments and promotion system for its teachers by that date led to an even greater premium being placed upon the attainment of good 'results'. Certainly, the teachers as a group were convinced that parents were interested only in 'results', not in how they were achieved. Moreover, a Board which went to the length of publicising the names of those teachers whose classes achieved a poor percentage pass rate, did nothing to dispel a narrow public interpretation of educational efficiency.

The Board first began to concern itself more actively with educational, as opposed to administrative, questions after 1884. Stout, as Minister of Education, cast public doubt on the worth of much of the examining which took place in the schools, and his expressions of opinion coincided with growing objections from influential spokesmen against 'cramming' practices in the schools. In Otago men like Dr Brown, Dr MacGregor, and J.F.M. Fraser joined the Board with the object of using the Board's authority to promote what they regarded as being necessary reforms in the province's schools. Their achievements were, however, limited because they soon discovered that there was a decided restriction upon what the Board could in fact do by way of unilateral action. Lack of finance combined with the 'checks and balances' of the 1877 Act frustrated Brown's attempts to improve infant education, and it was also clear that Board members possessing reformist sympathies were not always as closely in contact with the



educational situation in the schools as might have been desired. The evidence suggests, for example, that MacGregor's proposed syllabus reforms in 1887 were not built upon a careful appraisal of the actual conditions and standards of teaching in the classrooms. MacGregor's work was important with respect to the intent that it signified, but it also highlighted the need for a greater degree of dialogue between the Board, the inspectors, the teachers and the Department.

Attention to educational developments was diverted by the election of the Atkinson Government in 1887. During Fisher's period of office as Minister of Education, the Board was forced to expend its energies upon defending schooling facilities in the province against strong retrenchment policies. This it did with far more skill and success than it had so far demonstrated in its attempts to promote educational reform. The Board now found it expedient to develop a more effective liaison with other education boards and in 1889 felt that the time had come for a conference of education boards, inspectors, and Departmental officers to be held in order that general educational policies might be evaluated. It was clear that while Fisher's threat to abolish the boards had easily been evaded, provincial isolationism was beginning to wane. As far as Otago was concerned, this occurred in large part because the Board began to realise that the discrete division of powers provided for in the 1877 Act no longer satisfied practical educational needs.

At this point in its history, the Board became engaged in renewed strife with the school committees over the issue of appointments and dismissals. After the 'Kaikorai Judgment' in 1888, the Board was forced to the conclusion that a more centralised system of appointments and promotions was necessary if teachers were to be judged on qualities apart from personal lobbying power and percentage results records. The evidence suggests that there was considerable public sympathy for the 'Three Name' system of appointment which Hislop devised and which the Board attempted to put into operation. In the end, however, the committees had their way and the system was abandoned. The committees demonstrated their political power by voting strong minded Board members out of office and replacing them with nonentities who promised not to interfere with committeemen's discretion in appointments. This was parochialism at its worst.

The election of the Ballance Government in 1890 signified a new spirit of egalitarianism emerging in the country as a whole. Parents' expectations in relation to the schools were raised and this presented a new challenge to the Board which was now also faced with the problem of trying to maintain traditional facilities and modes of expenditure in the face of a declining growth rate in the child population. Education also became part of wider community

politics in a manner which the Board had not previously encountered. In 1890, the Board was shocked to find that public opinion on school affairs could be expressed in ways other than through school committees. This occurred when the Board, by unwittingly allowing its text books regulations to become the focus of an industrial dispute, found itself confronting militant trade unions. There can be little doubt that the 'textbooks controversy' was a distressing experience for the Board, but it did have the effect of encouraging some forthright opinion from the public on specific matters of educational policy. Above all, it provided political incentive for the new Minister of Education, William Pember Reeves, to pursue the more general question of educational reform.

As far as his dealings with the Otago Board were concerned, Reeves was by far the most effective minister to hold office in the period under review. Reeves decided as a matter of deliberate policy to invite the education boards to participate fully in discussing possible reforms in national educational policy. In Otago this had the effect of encouraging men with advanced views on educational matters to offer themselves again as candidates for seats on the Board. Many school committees, provided that their rights in appointments were not threatened, were now keen to support the Board's increasing advocacy of educational reforms. It was soon apparent, in fact, that liberal members of the Board wished to proceed with reforms at a faster rate than the Board's professional officers cared to see or the Department was prepared to allow. While on the one hand the Board tried to regulate against such practices as the imposition of excessive homework, it attempted on the other to grant its teachers more responsibility for the work which they undertook in the classrooms. The Board's decision in 1892 to abandon publishing the percentage pass results of individual schools was consistent with this policy, as were its continued calls for the Department to hold a national conference of professional officers to discuss liberalisation of the curricula and of evaluation procedures. Although the recommendations of the Inspectors' Conference in 1894 were not as radical as the Board had hoped they would be, members continued to agitate against the 'standards pass' until most of their aspirations were fulfilled by Hogben's examination reforms introduced in 1899. As far as many of the Board's members were concerned, these reforms were at least ten years overdue.

After 1891, the quality of educational argument evinced by the Board was remarkably high. While the Board's comment on more practical issues like the compulsory clauses continued to be competent, its advocacy for such things as improved teacher training and liberalised classroom procedures was outstanding. A great deal was owed to the competence of men like Hislop, MacGregor and Cohen, their work inspiring the Board as a whole to become increasingly unsympathetic with the cautious attitude of the inspectors and the Department

towards educational reform. The public was now prepared to entertain the case for reform more seriously and this again owed something to the energies of men like MacGregor and Cohen who were prepared to listen to what parents, committees and teachers were saying and to discuss their own ideas with interested groups in the community.

Nevertheless, the pace of reform seemed disappointingly slow to many. The fact that the Board possessed few powers of discretion to initiate reform was clearly evident. This was especially the case when the public's demand for educational services outgrew those which had been envisaged as being adequate in 1877, and it became apparent that the Board lacked both the financial resources and the legislative authority to satisfy the growth in demand for pre-school and post-primary education. Members like Cohen and MacGregor displayed a lively and provocative interest in these questions, but public debate and controversy often seemed wasted when it became clear that the Board had little power to take action. By 1899, in fact, it had become apparent that whereas in 1877 it had been envisaged that the boards would be responsible for most of the public education required in their districts, they were now unable to cope with demands for new kinds of education that were beyond the strict limits of the primary school. Instead the proliferation of *ad hoc* educational authorities had begun.

Nor was the Board able to overcome the parochial tendencies of school committees in matters of appointment. Although considerable hopes were held for Cohen's grading scheme introduced in 1895, it proved to be no more acceptable than had the earlier 'Three Name' appointment scheme. The Board also came to appreciate that the embarrassing oversupply of teachers with which it was faced in later years was a reflection of what occurred when the teaching force could not be deployed efficiently throughout the country. Accordingly, Board's members began to look increasingly to the Department to formulate some system of appointments, promotion and remuneration which might succeed where the Board had conspicuously and consistently failed. In a general sense, evidence from Board proceedings indicates that by the end of the period under review the Board had come to recognise the limitations which prevented it from acting as a more effective educational authority in the community. Although no member expressed a desire to cede all control to the Department in Wellington, there was growing agreement that either the boards would have to be given greater powers of regional initiative or else the Department would have to take direct control where such control was justified on the grounds of financial equity or educational need.

The latter argument had strong appeal to men like Cohen and MacGregor. They finally came to the conclusion that a centralised system of appointments, promotion and inspection, would not only free teachers from the inhibiting effects

of external examinations but would also enable a more autonomous teaching profession to initiate progressive educational practices in the classrooms. Both spokesmen, reflecting upon their experiences as members of school committees and the Board, believed that the quality of teaching and learning in the schools had been sadly marred by the system of divided professional authority imposed by the 1877 Act. Both were convinced that once education came under more coherent professional control it would be freed from many of the ills with which it had been beset.

The general trend evident in the Board's thinking and actions over the years 1877 to 1899 was therefore, a trend away from provincial isolationism and maintenance of the *status quo* towards participating in reforms to the national system of education. Thus, by 1899, most Board members had come to appreciate that arguments based upon the promise of educational improvements were worthy reasons for possible changes being made in the location of specific administrative controls. This was very different to the situation which had existed in 1877. At that time, Bowen had been forced to attempt to satisfy desires to maintain provincial autonomy, desires which were strengthened by the Legislature's decision to place the inspectors under the authority of the boards rather than the Department. One of the major justifications advanced for strong board control in 1877 was the belief that Board government would allow the public to participate in the making of educational policy and so avoid the danger of schooling policies being decided upon by bureaucrats and teachers not immediately answerable to the public. This being the case, the question might fairly be asked: To what extent *did* the Board act as a popular authority during the period under review.

An analysis of the debates in 1877 reveals no precise agreement about what the local administrative machinery was supposed to achieve other than to act as a check upon professionalism [as outlined above] and to preserve provincial identity. What was markedly obvious, however, was the Legislature's suspicion of the new Department it was about to create. In the minds of many politicians, the major task of the boards was to check what was believed to be the general propensity of central authorities to conduct themselves in an arbitrary and insensitive manner. Accordingly, the provision of schools and their maintenance was left to bodies allegedly responsive to local opinion, as was the appointment of staff and certain incidental services associated with the schools.

What was immediately apparent to some, however, and what became increasingly apparent to all with the passage of time, was that the local administrative machinery had very little direct control over the kind of education provided in the schools. Nor, as already shown, were the boards and the school committees able to respond as effectively as they would have liked to local

demands for new kinds of education. The evidence from this study suggests that Campbell correctly opined that, 'Through its syllabus of instruction ... the Department dominated the internal life of the schools from the outset, leaving very little indeed to the discretion of the local inspectors and teachers.'<sup>2</sup> Campbell might well have added 'and the school committees and education boards' because the Board and the committees in Otago soon discovered that when they attempted to modify the kind of education being provided in the schools, the Department came very close to being the inflexible body which the legislators in 1877 had sought to avoid creating. In this respect, it seems clear that the Board would still have had little power to initiate worthwhile changes even if its relationships with the local community had been as close and responsive as might ideally have been desired.

On the other hand, there were occasions when the Board acted in the name of the province in a way that proved the worth of an elected regional authority. The Board's delicate handling of the compulsory clauses issue was a good case in point, as was its firm rejection of attempts by committeemen, parents and teachers to exclude certain kinds of pupils from full access to educational opportunities. Nor was it without significance that the Board was seen in its best local light when it vigorously defended the province's schools from Fisher's harsh retrenchment policies. This was something which the Board felt that it could do, and something which local opinion believed that it should do but undoubtedly it was as a publiciser of alternative educational policies that the Board performed its most valuable function as a popular authority. Dr Brown was the first member to hit upon the idea of using his position on the Board to publicise medical opinion against the cramming practices evident in the schools. The tactic was taken up with enthusiasm several years later when Dr MacGregor endeavoured to use the offices of the Board to consolidate influential opinion against the principles which underlay the existing syllabus. Later, the opinions of committees and teachers were used to even greater effect by those Board members who were anxious to promote classroom reform. After 1891, the Department's reluctance to change the syllabus and the examination system gave the Board the opportunity to act as a public critic and the evidence suggests that it did this more effectively than did inspectors, teachers, and the more interested school committees.

The fact remained, however, that the Board was always something less than a fully popular authority in relation to the wider community in Otago. This was a direct result of its electoral basis in the school committees. On rare occasions [notably the 'textbooks controversy']

the Board was compelled to respond to sectors of public opinion which were not expressed via school committees. But more usually, the Board was inevitably persuaded that committee opinion was what counted on the political scene. The system of board elections introduced by the 1877 Act was a modification of the provincial practice in Nelson where each school committee in a large geographical area [or ward] had returned one representative to a central education board. Committee election of boards seems to have been decided upon in 1877 first because it was felt that possession of the electoral franchise would give the committees real power in the educational enterprise, second because it was a more economic procedure than direct elections would have been, and third because it was believed that committee elections would reduce the risk of 'the wrong kind' of people being chosen to sit on the boards in the respective provinces.

In Otago it was soon apparent that 'undesirable' people would not be elected to the Board, but the price that was paid for an indirect form of election soon became evident. Backing a direct relationship with the interested public, the Board was forced to rely upon events like the retrenchment crisis in 1887 to impress its worth as an authority upon the public imagination. An unfortunate temptation to which many members readily succumbed, was to gain cheap publicity through colourful squabbling and making wild accusations against the Board's official servants. This provided public entertainment but hardly added to the reputation of the Board as a whole. More importantly, the method of indirect election appears on occasion to have had the marked effect of insulating the Board from what Reeves once called 'important moves in the public mind'. The Board was taken completely by surprise when working class agitation was turned against the schools in 1890. Its identification of the public with the usual political pressures mounted by school committees had not prepared the Board for what occurred. Sadly too, the trade union interests of the day decided not to proceed with their threat to use their voting strength through the school committees to elect a Board to their liking. Although they represented a vigorous new political interest group, the unions were conservative in their educational thinking. Possibly, this was because union interests had never seriously engaged in debate on educational matters, an activity which the system of indirect board election through school committees did nothing to encourage.

If the principle of indirect election contained unsatisfactory features, the elections in practice were even worse. Until the Dunedin City and

Suburban School Committees Conference learned to call upon candidates to state publicly their views on specific issues, electioneering was entirely secretive and underhand in its effect. Candidates circularised committees but what they said was not for the public ear, and the election of Board members was seldom discussed at the annual general meetings of householders in the respective school districts.<sup>3</sup> The committees' vote as a whole for Board candidates, and the system of annual retirement of three Board members, ensured that the Board's membership was not unduly disturbed by 'important moves in the public mind'. Taken as a whole any electoral machinery more likely to produce indifference and apathy on the part of the general public would have been hard to devise. Towards the end of the period under review, moves were afoot to introduce such improvements as a ward system of election and single voting by committeemen. These were reforms in the right direction although it seems clear that even the most popular system of voting would not have overcome the other basic problem, namely that for the most part the Board was powerless to bring about worthwhile educational changes in school programmes through direct action.

This is not to say that the school committees exerted no pressure on the Board, nor that in turn they were not influenced in their outlook by the Board's policies. Reformists like Brown, MacGregor and Cohen had some outstanding successes in persuading committees of the need for educational change but it has to be said that during the period under review the influence of the committees on the Board was sometimes unhelpful and on occasion seriously frustrated educational development. The two major areas of controversy were the division of interest between town and country and the extent of committee control over teacher appointments and dismissals. In point of fact, the Board handled the problem of town versus country rather better than might have been expected, but the suspicion between rural and urban committees never died away completely. Rural committeemen often viewed the Board as their protection against the scavenger instincts which they believed to characterise urban dwellers. Not only did this sometimes have an undesirable influence upon the internal politics of the Board but it also ensured that the school committees as a whole seldom worked together in ways that might have profited educational progress in general.

The one issue upon which Otago's school committees were fairly united was their determination to resist what they took to be the Board's selfish desire to usurp the power given in law for committees to participate in making teacher appointments. Events during the period

under review provide overwhelming evidence that the committees consistently refused to recognise that the Board had any educational justification for centralising appointments and promotion procedures. Moreover, the committees made it clear that they were quite prepared to vote capable opponents off the Board and in various other ways frustrate the Board's attempts to introduce improved appointment procedures. The fact that this resulted in undesirable practices such as 'buttonholing' and an undue concentration upon a teacher's record of 'results' does not seem to have disturbed the committees greatly. Committeemen assumed that they were acting in the public interest to check the dictatorial tendencies of a central Board. There is less evidence that the public consistently supported the committees' stand, but what is clear is that the committees were often supported by influential teachers in the province. Had the Board received the full support of the Otago Educational Institute for its 'Three Name' system, and for the later grading scheme, it seems quite likely that the Board would have been able to break the stranglehold which the school committees continued to exert over appointments prior to 1900.

In most other respects, Otago's school committees had less discretion in school affairs after 1877 than they had possessed in the provincial period. By 1880, their new role as groups of interested persons prepared to contribute voluntarily to working for school amenities was becoming every bit as important as the formal powers granted the committees under the Act. There were no longer any advantages to be gained from having a single committee responsible for a number of schools, but the founding of the Dunedin City and Suburban School Committees Conference in 1884, marked a new, and fairly successful, attempt by some committees to exert political pressure on the Board. Critics were quick to conclude that the Conference would achieve little because it possessed no legislative authority. This, however, proved to be no disadvantage. The Conference knew how to publicise its views, a fact which the Board recognised by reacting promptly and sensitively to the Conference's requests or criticisms. From the Board's point of view, a single school committee was relatively easy to isolate and override on most issues, but a federation of committees acting with a collective public voice was not. For this reason the Dunedin Conference was by far the strongest and most worthwhile exponent of school committee views in the province during the period under review.

From time to time the Conference claimed that the Board was superfluous as an administrative authority and this was also the view of George Fisher who believed that by 1887 the education boards were guilty of reckless extravagance with public monies. There is no doubt that during the early years of the period



when the capitation system worked in Otago's favour, the Board's building programme was lavish compared with those in other provinces. Yet it is difficult to conclude that the Board was irresponsible and wasteful with the public money entrusted to its care. Reference has already been made to the Board's decision to build large urban schools before trying to satisfy claims from the smaller rural areas of settlement, and the evidence suggests that the Board did its best to determine roll projections before any new school was established.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, mistakes were made. Projections were difficult to establish in a period when the compulsory clauses were not effectively enforced, when the school retention rate was changing, and when the population was highly mobile. Nevertheless, contemporary critics believed that Otago was far more cautious and efficient in its building programme than were some of the other larger provinces like Auckland.

What really handicapped the Board's ability to expend monies efficiently was the uncertain nature of its income. While no one could predict the amount and regularity of special building grants, the total of capitation income also depended upon a variety of accidental factors. There was, therefore, a strong temptation placed upon individual boards to spend all the money they received and then, like *Oliver Twists*, to ask for more. Unofficially, the Otago Board tried to keep money in reserve to meet shortfalls in attendance income, but the Board's finances never fully recovered after the measles epidemic in 1893. Thereafter it was increasingly reduced to the hand to mouth existence which had plagued weaker boards in the years immediately after 1877.

Under Professor Shand's guidance, however, the Board did make a deliberate decision to spend money on providing higher than average salaries for its teachers, money that might well have been spent on supplying extra schoolrooms and a greater number of poorer paid teachers. The Board took the view that quality should not be sacrificed for quantity, a conclusion consistent with the Board's stress upon the value of teacher training and its desire prior to 1883 to import trained teachers from Scotland and Victoria. Although it was true that prior to 1887 the Board did not question the assumption that most teachers needed to be spurred by 'results', thereafter it increasingly took the view that the key to educational progress lay in encouraging teachers to become more responsible for their own standards of work. The Board's continued advocacy of teacher training, and its relatively generous scale of salaries made sense in the light of this general policy. It was hoped that a better qualified and remunerated profession would heighten public confidence in the teachers and the schools.

The Board's attitude towards its official officers also changed during the period under review. Initially the inspectors were required to provide straightforward and honest reports of the extent to which schools in the province

were meeting the standards of efficiency laid down by the national syllabus prescriptions. As the Board came to participate more and more in educational criticism however, so it became increasingly dissatisfied with the earlier emphasis it had placed on the role of the inspector as a watchdog of 'standards'. After 1887 the Board began to expect its officers to encourage educational innovation and to demonstrate improved teaching techniques, but the inspectors found this to be very difficult to effect in the context of their daily work. In outlook, the inspectors were not fully in sympathy with the more radical members on the Board, and until the end of the period under study they were regarded by the teachers and the public as being agents of conservatism rather than of change.

There can be no doubt that the Board's inspectors were often unfairly blamed for the educational inadequacies which became increasingly apparent between 1877 and 1899. The inspectors' criticisms of contemporary teaching practices were often apt, while their contribution to matters such as teacher training was considerable. They were responsible and hard working men but it became quite clear that their judgmental function prevented them from being able to encourage teachers to take more responsibility for their own standards of work. A study of school inspectors in Australia suggests that inspectors in that country viewed themselves 'as bringers of light, purveyors of wisdom, stimulators of desirable practices, and to a slightly lesser extent as upholders of standards.'<sup>5</sup> Otago's inspectors described themselves in remarkably similar terms, but the examination system ensured that both the teachers and the public interpreted all of an inspector's actions in the light of his judgmental role.

It was probably for this reason that attempts by Otago's inspectors to provide positive criticism and advice had little public impact. Whereas 'the inspector as watchdog' was a fact of life accepted with varying degrees of enthusiasm throughout the period under review, little comment was made about the voluminous annual reports in which the inspectors suggested many educational improvements that might be implemented. Read in isolation by a researcher, these reports give a misleading view of the contribution made by the inspectors to educational change. Butchers, for example, writes: 'As Board officers for 37 years the inspectors ... rendered invaluable service to the cause of education in New Zealand by their independent and frank criticisms of the proposals and schemes of the Central Department. That they were capable of taking a line independent of their own employers, the Boards, is evidenced abundantly in their voluminous reports ... There has been in this respect an unquestioned loss in the direction of independent criticism in the centralisation of the Inspectorate.'<sup>6</sup> Irrespective of the issue of centralisation, Butchers' views need to be considered alongside the fact that the inspectors' Reports [unlike examination results] never created substantial public interest in Otago. The Board, itself, did not consider the annual

reports worth debate except in 1891 when a small section of incidental comment was used by radical members for purposes the inspectors had not intended.

The inspectors tended to follow Matthew Arnold's declared aim of 'finding out and reporting the truth',<sup>7</sup> but they frequently found themselves to be in danger of being caught in a situation of divided loyalty between the Board and the Department. This was the direct cause of Petrie's resignation in 1894 but as a general rule the inspectors sought to protect themselves by adhering closely to the national regulations governing the work of the schools, a procedure that was safe but not calculated to encourage the Board to look to its officials to promote reform. The Board, because it was in no way responsible for the national syllabus prescriptions and did not have the onerous task of having to evaluate the schools in the light of those prescriptions, was in a much better position to act as an authoritative critic. After 1890 the Board proceeded to do this in a way that could not be matched either by the inspectors or by the teachers who were described by one writer as being 'eaten up with conscientiousness'.<sup>8</sup>

It has sometimes been claimed that local administration rarely induces the creativity in educational policy which is alleged to be its virtue.<sup>9</sup> It would certainly be hard to describe the period under study as being a 'creative'<sup>10</sup> era in educational development, but it has been seen that in most respects the educational inadequacies of the day were not due to particular failings of the Board. On the positive side, in fact, the Board did more than any other body in Otago to publicise the absurdities of the system of locked-step schooling, a system which has been described as stupid in its assumption, impossible in its conditions, and juggernaut in its operations'.<sup>11</sup> In this, as in other related matters, the quality of educational criticism and argument exhibited by some Board members was remarkably high. On occasions, individual members were able to synthesise brilliantly the viewpoints of parents, teachers and interested laymen, and generally speaking men like Brown, Fraser, Cohen and MacGregor possessed far more vitality and sensitivity in their educational thinking than did officers of the Department or run of the mill parliamentarians. The only comparable source of sophistication lay in the ideas of some of the senior teachers, ideas which were publicised by the Otago Educational Institute. These views, however, were often regarded by the public as being partisan in the extreme. They lacked the public authenticity which the Board's criticisms often, although not always, possessed.

What becomes clear as one reviews the totality of events during these years, is that the Habens period was a time in which significant developments took place in educational thinking and practice in Otago. This is a fact which has received little recognition in conventional histories. Most writers have acknowledged the growth that took place in

the number of the nation's schools after 1877, but they have found the Habens period to be singularly devoid of educational interest. Butchers' describes the period as being one of stagnation and frustrated development,<sup>12</sup> a point endorsed by Webb<sup>13</sup> who believed that it was not a period of great advance in education. Campbell<sup>14</sup> concluded that it was a time for inadequate educational endeavour characterised above all by 'public indifference to educational affairs'.<sup>15</sup> All of these authorities agreed that noteworthy developments in New Zealand's education system did not take place until the Hogben Period [1899-1915], an interpretation which found its way into such documents as the Atmore Report and the Currie Commission.<sup>16</sup>

The evidence from this study supports the contention that Hogben was faced with the task of initiating reforms that were long overdue. But it casts doubt upon the common assumption that little of educational worth occurred during the years of 'Board Supremacy'. What appears to be lost in the conventional theses that have been advanced to explain this period is a dimension that enables Hogben's work to be judged in a more adequate perspective, a perspective which takes account of the educational changes which New Zealand's schools underwent. As far as Otago was concerned, the initial problem presented by the 1877 Act was the need to provide facilities for the vastly increased numbers of children who sought entry to the schools after the introduction of free education on 1 January 1878.<sup>17</sup> Once school buildings, temporary and otherwise, were provided, the next task was to impose some kind of order on the work of the children and the teachers in the schools. Older children who were entering school for the first time presented a peculiar classification difficulty, but spokesmen in the province who had already seen the principle of 'standards' operating in the provincial education system believed that the proposal in the Act to provide a uniform specification of attainment and means of evaluation via a national syllabus was probably desirable, and most certainly necessary.

Criticism of Habens' standards came first from teachers who objected to the quantity of prescribed work, especially in relation to the working problems which faced teachers in sole-charge schools. At this stage, the necessity of examinations based upon a common syllabus was not questioned; the viability of the specific prescriptions was. The Department responded slowly to the complaints advanced, its decision in 1885 to introduce the 'class pass' for some subjects providing the first official recognition of the limitations of the principle of individual examination. Habens was less successful in countering another common, criticism that inspectors in the different board districts, and even within the same district, interpreted the national syllabus prescriptions in different

ways. Over the years 1878-1885, the Inspector-General attempted to specify his prescriptions more exactly, but when he took office as Minister of Education, Stout was forced to the conclusion that the results of school examinations in the respective districts were probably not strictly comparable. This was also the view later reached by Reeves.

By 1890, fewer of the teachers and the interested public in Otago believed that undesirable teaching practices in the schools could be eradicated merely by altering syllabus prescriptions. Indeed, it had become clearer to many that 'extensive cramming' was as much the result of the public's desire to assess schooling by means of an examination mark as it was the product of the Department's syllabus. The power exercised by school committees over the appointment of Otago's teachers appears to have accentuated the emphasis which teachers themselves placed upon gaining good results. Equally significant however, was the growing vocational value attached to examination qualifications. The change in the school retention rate demonstrated what was occurring as the teachers learned to drive their pupils more efficiently through the standards. The most dramatic manifestation was the rise in the numbers of children entering standard seven either because they sought the scarcity value of a standard seven qualification, or because they wished to attempt post primary subjects, or because they were too young to enter the labour market. With the introduction of Reeves' factory legislation in 1891, New Zealand was fast becoming a society in which vocational opportunity was closely matched to the possession of school qualifications.

The initial effect of this phenomenon did nothing to assist the liberalisation of classroom practices. Instead, as pressure was exerted on the schools to sort out those children who were suited to 'white-collar' occupations, syllabus-grinding practices were encouraged. The temptation placed in the way of teachers and parents was to argue that it mattered little how an examination was passed as long as it was passed. The temptation for inspectors, on the other hand, was to raise their standard of expectation to match the improved examination preparation of the teachers. This fact, finally admitted publicly by Otago's inspectors in 1891, appears to have marked the point at which many critics began to look closely at what was actually occurring in the schools.

While the emphasis upon examinations had been given full rein, it was also the case that as increasing numbers of children were inducted into the schools for a longer period of time, the general public listened more attentively to spokesmen who claimed that the schools should be places concerned with providing rewarding educative experiences for all pupils. In short, once the 1877 Act had opened the way to free schooling, there was a steady growth in demands that education be conducted in improved physical environs and be more suited to the

differing capacities, interests, and aptitudes of individual pupils.<sup>18</sup> In Otago, these demands showed themselves in general criticisms of the existing syllabus and the inspection procedures, in growing interest in infant and pre-school education, and in increased numbers of claims that the schools should concentrate more on practical subjects and less on arid bookish knowledge. The fact was, however, that a tightly specified syllabus was more suited to satisfy the desire for 'results' than were exhortations to cater for individual differences. Since the system of divided professional authority introduced by the 1877 Act did little to encourage professional officers to move away from the 'iron-clad' security of detailed syllabus prescriptions it was the lay administrative authorities which had to take the initiative in pressing for change.

The public needed to be overwhelmingly convinced that a liberalization of the examination procedures was necessary and desirable on educational grounds. A start was made in 1894 when the Department at last agreed to follow British precedent and allow head teachers freedom of classification in standards one and two. Even so, it is worth noting that this step did not interfere unduly with the importance which employers placed upon qualifications in the higher standards. Again, when it was finally decided in 1899 to abandon most external examining in the primary schools, employers and parents were still granted the security of the inspectors' judgment in the terminal standard six examination. Thus a compromise was effected between desires that the schools should provide educative experiences for all, and expectations that schools would conform to a common standard and produce results upon which parents and employers could rely.

The tardiness with which major changes in education took place during the period under review, amply endorsed Parkyn's contention, '...that in a democratic society a great many people always have to be convinced of the desirability of a change before it can be profitably made'.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, by 1899, it was clear that there was substantial agreement that improved teaching and learning in the schools would result if external examinations were abolished and teachers were granted the opportunity to adapt general educational objectives to the specific conditions confronting them in the classrooms. 'Uniformity', it was now argued, might be more profitably interpreted as equivalence in terms of the standard of teaching provided rather than precise sameness of detail in the work accomplished in the nation's classrooms. To this end, it was now also believed that there were good educational reasons for placing all inspectors under the control of the Department of Education. As departmental officers, it was argued, the inspectors would be able to interpret national policy effectively to teachers, keep the Department informed about developments in the classrooms, and guarantee to the public that the teachers were making good use of the greater responsibility

allocated to them. Cohen and MacGregor were two of a number of interested spokesmen in Otago who reached the conclusion that 'uniformity' arrived at by these means would be less educationally harmful than the 'standards' system imposed by the 1877 Act'. Thus the way was paved for the acceptance of Hogben's reforms, especially those reforms which entrusted a greater degree of professional responsibility to the individual teacher.<sup>20</sup>

In retrospect, it seems clear that the Habens period in Otago was an era of significant, although sometimes undramatic, educational development. In the first place, the network of public schools in the province was expanded and maintained in spite of economic difficulties and a decline in the growth rate of the child population in later years. In the second place, as universal education came closer to being fully realised in the province, there was a growing demand from the teachers and the public that the schools provide something better than the 'mindless' teaching and learning procedures which had first ensued after 1877. In the third place, it became clearer towards the end of the period under review that the public's aspirations for educational opportunities had advanced far beyond the facilities regarded as being adequate in 1877, especially regarding pre-school and secondary education. Over these developments, the Otago Education Board exercised a significant influence. The Board was directly responsible for developing, maintaining, and defending the primary school system. It also indicated in a variety of ways to its teachers that public attitudes towards the schools were changing and it frequently acted as a pressure group seeking actively and intelligently to bring about specific educational reforms.

While to the dismay of some, the provisions of the 1877 Act ensured that the Board had full responsibility for building and maintaining the province's primary schools. The evidence suggests that in general the Board used its powers responsibly. During the earlier years when the capitation system worked in Otago's favour, the Board was suitably cautious in its approach to the many demands from small districts for the immediate establishment of local schools. Later, as the result of a series of retrenchments in the government's education grants and the loss of continued 'natural' growth in capitation revenue, the Board was discouraged from forward planning and came to appreciate the deficiencies of a financing system built upon attendance returns and a 'scramble for building grants in Wellington'. It was true that the Board's change of heart appears to have been strongly influenced by the fact that after 1887 it was no longer a favoured beneficiary of the capitation system, but there is no evidence to suggest that the Board's expenditure throughout the period under study was grossly irresponsible.

Many of the Board's decisions [e.g. to build or to close schools] were made about practical matters which could just as easily have been adjudicated by a

government department. What the Board was able to do however, was to give the public in its district the sense that the schools in Otago were first and foremost Otago's schools. It was able to do this because Board members, unlike government officials,<sup>21</sup> were not constrained to avoid controversy. As lay representatives they could and did criticise when and whom they pleased, they could and did defend the schools vigorously from biased local criticism,<sup>22</sup> and they could and did act as a check upon the Board's own officials when those officials were thought to have exceeded their authority.<sup>23</sup> Although it was clearly apparent during the years under review that the Board often lacked the power to initiate changes it deemed desirable, it did succeed in creating a psychological identification between community and school, an identification which proved to be stronger than the potential rifts between town and country. Thus, despite the deficiencies of its electoral basis, the lay composition of the Board enabled it to act in ways that were not open to a government department.

As a lay regional authority, the Board was able to do much, for example, to clarify the sensitive issues surrounding the question of the degree and form of public control to be imposed upon the teachers in classrooms. At first, the Board emphasised the importance of school examination results as the criterion of teaching efficiency. This emphasis was encouraged both by the Board's failure to establish a satisfactory appointments and promotion system for its teachers and by the increasing vocational importance attached to school qualifications. After 1887, however, the Board began to press seriously for alternatives to the 'standards' examinations which were now considered to be having a disastrous effect upon the quality of education. Inevitably, this led the Board to advocate that more freedom, responsibility, and protection from ill-considered judgments, be granted to the individual teacher. After 1892, in fact, the Board was more forward in urging these reforms than were teachers, inspectors, or the Department. In a general sense, the Board succeeded in assisting the teachers in the province to define the direction of desired educational reforms and to create a climate of public opinion which welcomed such reforms.

The Board also contributed in less dramatic ways to the day when the teaching profession would be granted more autonomy. The importance which the Board attached to teacher training [especially after 1882] and its consistent general support for the teachers' professional organisation - the Otago Educational Institute - are noteworthy. Although the Board sometimes found that the teachers' desire for professional status did not fit easily with a master-servant relationship, and although the appointments system in Otago gave the teachers less autonomy than Bowen had intended, the Board increasingly did what it could to protect its teachers from excessive interference and acts of parochial injustice by school committees. On the other hand, the Board also tried



to indicate to the teachers what the public might expect from a profession, granted more discretion in its daily work. The Board's regulations concerning 'keeping in', homework, corporal punishment, and teachers and politics, conveyed a clear message to teachers. The eradication of undesirable teaching practices and unacceptable behaviour by individual teachers was the price to be demanded for greater professional autonomy.

The Board was also able to convey to the government and to the Department the consensus of a body of informed public opinion in Otago on specific educational issues. While it was true that it was not until 1883 that the Board felt inclined to express its own views on 'professional' matters, it became clear in later years that the quality of the Board's advice rose to the extent that its opinions were valued and sought by politicians and departmental officers. Stout was the first Minister of Education to see the possibilities of making use of the expertise of education boards, but the really dramatic change for the Otago Board came during Reeves' period of office.<sup>24</sup> Reeves was richly rewarded by the Board for his determination to seek its advice. Not only was the Board prepared to give the Minister the most responsible advice that it could on the specific questions it was asked but there was no doubt that as a result the Board's influence in consolidating local opinion upon a variety of educational reforms was profound. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the Board has ever again been at the centre of educational innovation in the way that it was during the years 1891 to 1899.

These achievements, however, could not disguise the real weaknesses under which the Board laboured as a lay educational authority. Reference has earlier been made to weaknesses in the Board's electoral composition and although there were occasions when the Board became a forum of debate between liberal and conservative proponents on specific educational issues, these occurred in spite of the electoral system and not because of it. By 1899 it had become clear that the strongest local pressure exerted publicly on the Board came from the Dunedin and Suburban School Committees Conference, a group that had no legislative authority and therefore no vested interest in engaging in actions which were not within the public's view. It was this development which led some critics to advocate more open forms of education board election. They believed that the reasons which had led legislators in 1877 to settle upon election by school committees were no longer relevant. It was also argued that the way in which Otago's school committees had used their electoral powers to frustrate the development of a viable appointments and promotion scheme for teachers was an added reason for the electoral system to be amended. The Board, for its part, was never able to compensate fully for the inadequacies of the indirect form of election initiated by the 1877 Act.

Equally as frustrating for the Board was the fact that it seldom possessed the powers to initiate educational changes when the need for such changes had been agreed upon at the Board table. Handicapped by an Education Act which was not designed to cope with demands for new forms of education and for increased educational opportunities, the Board was unable to provide in a satisfactory manner what the community came to seek by way of infant, technical, secondary and adult [or continuing] education. The Board's lack of authority in these respects, had a subtle, but important, effect upon its thinking and its actions. It seems no accident, for example, that the Board showed itself to be at its best when dealing with teacher training. Possessing in this instance initiatory powers, the Board committed itself to a definite policy, a policy to which it clung stubbornly in the face of the economic difficulties experienced after 1890. But the case was very different with the Board's attempts to legislate upon 'keeping in', homework, and corporal punishment. In these instances the Board did not possess full control over the educational situation, a situation significantly influenced by the national syllabus requirements. As a result, the Board was reluctant to enforce its regulations firmly for fear that it would be accused by teachers and parents of compromising the chances of individual pupils to gain success in the 'standards' examinations. Clearly, when the Board commanded the resources to act it was capable of acting in a responsible and enlightened manner but when the Board's powers of decision were limited its actions tended to be indecisive.

In summary, the conclusions reached on the basis of the evidence presented in this study are first, that the Habens period was an era of significant educational development in Otago, second that the Otago Education Board made a unique and influential contribution to that development, and third that the quality of the Board's contribution was lessened by the Board's unsatisfactory electoral basis and by its limited powers of initiative upon important educational questions. The evidence further suggests that partly because of the Board's policies, Otago's schools were ready to accept major reforms approximately ten years before they were introduced by Hogben in 1899. A subsidiary, but not unimportant conclusion, is that after 1890 there was an opportunity in the province to place most forms of education under the governance of the Board as a regional authority. After 1899, this opportunity was passed up in favour of greater departmental control and the multiplication of *ad hoc* local authorities.

## NOTES

1. i.e responsibility that was divided by separating the duties of prescribing the syllabus content from the task of evaluating the worth of that content in relation to classroom conditions.
2. A.E.Campbell, *Educating New Zealand* 1941 Wellington Dept of Internal Affairs p.53
3. These meetings were held *after* the Board elections, thus producing the incongruous situation of outgoing school committees voting in new Board members.
4. In 1880, for example, the Board carried out extensive estimates of the school age population in Dunedin. These were nullified to some extent by the government's decision to cease payment on all children under five years of age.
5. D.G.Ball, K.S.Cunningham, W.C.Radford, *Supervision and Inspection of the Primary School* 1961 Melbourne ACER p.97
6. A.G.Butchers, *The Education System* 1932, Auckland National Printing Co. p.118
7. Quoted in P.Smith & G.Summerfield, *Matthew Arnold & the Education of the New Order* 1969, Cambridge p.200
8. R.C.Stuart Ross, *Education & Educationists in Otago* 1890, Dunedin Wise and Co. p.48
9. W.C.Booth, *The Knowledge Most Worth Having* 1967, University of Chicago Press, p.47
10. The word 'creative' is used here in its conventional sense i.e. action characterized by innovation.
11. C.E.Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* 1970 New York Random House p.167
12. Butchers, *Education in New Zealand op.cit.*
13. L.C.Webb, *Control of Education in New Zealand op.cit.* p.39
14. Campbell, *Educating New Zealand op. cit.*
15. *Ibid* p.57
16. *Parliamentary Recess Education Committee Report* [Atmore Report] AJHR 1931 - 8A . *Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand 1962* [Currie Commission] AJHR 1962 E - 2
17. Butchers illustrates with convincing evidence that within one year of the passing of the 1877 Act, the national percentage of school age children attending the schools had increased from 50 to over 70 per cent. The Otago pattern of enrolment followed this trend, many children not previously catered for in the provincial system now attending the public schools. [Butchers, *Educating New Zealand op. cit.* p.138]
18. The outburst of criticism of the physical conditions in the Dunedin schools in 1885 , for example, needs to be viewed in the light of the fact that many of these schools were new. None of the critics suggested that school buildings had been better designed in earlier years when overcrowding had been common in city schools.

19. G.W.Parkyn, *The Administration of Education in New Zealand op.cit.*, p.108
20. By 1899, in spite of the long tradition of school committees appointing teachers in Otago, there was increased public sympathy with the view that the teacher should be regarded as a person possessing authoritative expertise by right of his qualifications. What this implied as far as control over teachers was concerned, was well summed up by Robert Hutchins who described the consequences of professionalism as being: 'On the side of the teachers and professors, the professional tradition would mean that they taught responsibly. On the side of the public the tradition would mean that the public restrained itself in the exercise of its legal control'. [R.M.Hutchins, *The Conflict in Education* 1953 New York Harper p.12]
21. Both Habens and Hislop [while he was employed in the Education Dept.] were reluctant to make personal public statements on educational matters unless officially invited to do so. Then, as now, government officials were wary of interfering with Ministerial responsibility.
22. For example, the charges of immoral behaviour in the schools which were advanced by Bishop Nevill in 1887.
23. As already seen, Pryde was usually and often unfairly the target for such censure; sometimes, especially after 1890, the inspectors were similarly treated. There could be no doubt that on occasion [e.g. the Farnie Case] the censure was well-deserved.
24. The Board also presented some outstanding educational argument during the retrenchment crisis in 1887. In this case its advice was certainly not especially sought by the Minister [George Fisher] except in the context of the parliamentary committee of inquiry., but other politicians were anxious to receive argument from the Board. The general thesis concerning the quality of the Board's advice seems therefore to be sustained.

## ***Bibliography***

### ***Note on Bibliography***

The bulk of the evidence upon which this study is based has been gained from primary source material contained in official publications, Otago Education Board records, and newspaper reports. Much of this evidence has not previously been used. The Otago Education Board possesses good records of outward correspondence although much of it is of little historical value. Unfortunately almost none of the inward correspondence has been retained. This deficiency has been countered as far as possible by making extensive use of newspaper sources which often reported significant inward correspondence from Habens and the Minister. Since the object of this study was to evaluate the contribution of the Board as a public authority to educational developments, newspaper evidence has been extensively utilized.

It was decided to concentrate upon the files of one newspaper [the *Otago Daily Times*] because of the consistent attention which the ODT gave to reporting Board affairs during the period under review. Other newspapers were consulted when controversial issues arose in the course of the study, but it was impractical to make extended use of these. The Board's own newspaper clipping book was of limited value because the items in it were selected and gave little insight into the wider issues occurring in the community. The greatest amount of time in research, was spent in the perusal of ODT files.

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*New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD)* 1877-1900

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## *Appendices*

[Note These are listed but not included in this work. They may be consulted in the original copy of the thesis deposited in the Library at the University of Otago.]

1. Table of attendance returns, number of schools, and number of teachers in Otago schools up to and including 1899.
2. Payments schedule to Otago school committees 1878.
3. Schedule of Otago teachers' salaries 1878.
4. Pupil teacher regulations in Otago 1983.
5. Otago training college regulations 1880, 1882, 1886.
6. Textbook regulations of the Otago education board 1888.
7. Scholarship regulations of the Otago education board 1890, 1894
8. Data relating to the socio-economic background and later careers of scholarship holders in Otago between 1878 – 1899.
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