PRE-SESSIONAL ADDRESS.

THE

HON. GEORGE FOWLDS AT GREY LYNN.

INTERESTING POLITICAL SPEECH.

AN ENSHUSIASTIC MEETING.

The Hon. Geo. Fowlds, Minister of Education, addressed a meeting of his constituents at the Tivoli Theatre, Newton, last night. The Mayor (Mr. W. J. Holdsworth) presided, and the hall was packed to its utmost capacity. On the stage were Messrs. C. H. Poole, M.P., A. E. Glover, M.P., F. Lawry, M.P., H. Poland, M.P., W. Beehan, M.L.C., B. Harris, M.L.C., Dr. McDowell, J. Jenkin, G. L. Peacocke, G. Sayers, G. Bagley, F. J. H. Ellisdon, R. W. Warnock. The Attorney-General (the Hon. Dr. Findlay) was also provided with a seat on the platform.

The Minister was accorded a splendid reception, and the meeting was most appreciative throughout. The speaker received a most attentive and sympathetic hearing, his remarks being punctuated throughout by warm outbursts of ap-applause. He commenced by referring to the loss sustained by the Empire through the death of the King. Mr. Fowlds also touched upon the departure from New Zealand of Lord and Lady Plunket, and eulogised the manner in which his Excellency had performed his high duties. Reference was next made to the death of Mr. F. E. Baume, deep sympathy being expressed for the deceased's widow and children and his mother. Mr. Fowlds characterised Mr. Baume as a straightforward, honest, good man, unselfish and ever looking after the interests of this part of New Zealand. (Applause.) Mr. Fowlds also expressed his personal regret at the loss sustained by the Catholic Church through the death of Bishop Lenihan. (Applause.)

GOVERNMENT HOUSE SITE.

There were two or three subjects that had been agitating the minds of the people of Auckland for some time past, which he proposed to deal with at once. The first of these subjects was that of Government House site. He had been shocked and pained at some of the statements he had seen in the columns of the public Press, showing a complete want of appreciation of the value to a democracy of higher education. He had even heard of sneers being indulged in at our University Colleges as being glorified night-schools. The only touch he had ever had with University education was at night classes in connection with the Andersonian College in Glasgow, and had therefore a very high appreciation of that form of University work. To meet the needs of a democracy for higher education, evening college classes must always be a leading feature. (Applause.) In Scotland in his time a very large percentage of the students passing through the universities were the children of very poor parents, and tremendous sacrifices had to be made by the students and their people to obtain higher education. Here in New Zealand they had brought our university education within the reach of the children of the poorest parents without payment of any fees whatever. This fact should be carefully borne in mind by the people in connection with this controversy. The great mass of the people were more interested in securing the efficiency of our university colleges than were the well-to-do people, for the latter could always afford to send their children to the European seats of learning for their education, whereas the children of the workers must either be educated here or miss it altogether. At the present time there were something like one hundred New Zealand students

in the Old Country studying for the medical and other professions, which proved the necessity for a more thorough equipment of university colleges in New Zealand to afford an equal opportunity to the children of the workers. In nearly every centre of New Zealand they had now free kindergarten schools, from which the children passed into the free primary schools. If in the latter they gained proficiency certificates they were entitled to free secondary or technical education, and, on showing that they would benefit by university instruction by passing the examination with credit, they might then receive free education in our university colleges.

"Regarding the question of Government House site," continued Mr Fowlds, "I desire to say that before I became a Minister of the Crown a very strong agitation had existed to secure the Metropolitan Grounds for university purposes. On assuming the office of Minister of Education, I found that there were then insuperable difficulties in carrying out that proposal, and, recognising that the needs of the university would in time necessitate the use of the whole of Government House site, I set myself the task of securing that magnificent site for the educational use and general benefit of the people of this province. I consequently discussed the question with a number of leading men interested in educational matters, and it was in consequence of information I supplied that the agitation on the subject of a university site and buildings was left in abeyance until a suitable opportunity arose for giving effect to my proposals. It was a very great surprise to me to find even a few objectors to the proposal that was announced in the Budget of last year. You will remember that practically no objection was raised then to the doing away with Government House, the controversy in the Press being mainly as to whether a portion of the ground should also be set aside for Grammar School purposes. I had even then other proposals under consideration for meeting the undoubted needs of the Grammar School in the matter of a suitable playground. I felt then, as I feel now, that it would be a huge mistake to limit the possibility for university extension by complicating the issue with the needs of the Grammar School. After the fullest investigation, I know of no site in Auckland suitable for university purposes except Government House grounds (applause and cries of "No!"), the area of which is none too large for present needs and those of the near future. Here I might remark that the Queensland Government has recently set asme the Brisbane Government House and grounds, which include about thirty-five acres, for university purposes. Even that area of land has been deemed by some to be insufficient for future extension. In any arrangement that may be made I can see my way to make adequate provision for Grammar School purposes without trenching on Government House site, the area of selection of suitable sites for Grammar School purposes being much larger than that available for the University College. I fully expect to live to see the time when the population of the Auckland Province will be much greater than the present total population of New Zealand. When that time arrives the area of the Government House site will be considered inadequate rather than too large. (Applause.)

CHEAP SNEERS.

The Minister went on to say that some cheap sneers had been indulged in about erecting on the grounds of Government House site a boarding-house for young ladies and young gentlemen. He had no desire whatever to see a system established that would set university students in a class by themselves, but he would say most emphatically (considering the fact that Auckland University College must serve the needs of the whole province) that it was highly desirable to have residential colleges both for male and female students coming from the country districts (applause), for it must always be borne in mind that we have to provide not only for Greater Auckland, but for the whole of this great province. Some provision of this kind had already been made both in Dunedin and Wellington. In the case of Dunedin, the matter of providing residential accommodation for university college students was taken up by the Rev. A. Cameron on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. The Church gave a site of ten acres, valued at £5000, and £25,000 was spent on the buildings, of which the magnificent sum of £10,000 was contributed by Mr and Mrs John Ross, of Dunedin, and £1350 was spent in furnishing the buildings. Though opened only about twelve months ago, this residential college was already quite full, and other students were seeking

admission. Of the fifty students in residence, eleven were in the Theological Hall, 39 were taking the Arts course at the University, eight of them were preparing for the teaching profession, 15 were medical students, one was studying dentistry, and one law. If the Auckland University College was to adequately serve the needs of the province, some similar accommodation would before very long have to be provided, and the area of the proposed site would be found to be none too large for this and the other purposes of the College.

"Before leaving this subject," added the Minister, "I desire to express my regret that in connection therewith I have come into conflict with my friend the editor of the 'Auckland Star,' who has rendered yeoman service to democratic movements and institutions in the past; but in this case my sense of public duty to the present and the future residents of Auckland Province has led me to take an opposite view from him. I am by no means unmindful of the natural sentiment arising from the historical associations of the old place, and I know of no better way of utilising that sentiment than by intertwining it with the future educational life of the province." (Applause.) "Regarding the use of the grounds for the public of Auckland, I have all along intimated my intention of securing to the people free access to the grounds at all reasonable times. In that way the place will be of much greater benefit to the people than it has ever been in the past." (Applause.)

THE KNYVETT CASE.

The Hon. Mr. Fowlds then went on to deal with the Knyvett case. This, he said, was the second of the thorny subjects to which he had referred. A good deal of wild talk and misrepresentation had been indulged in in connection with this matter, and it was rather unfortunate that, as in the case of the University site, only one side of it had found expression in the Auckland Press. Recently we had a visit from Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, the greatest soldier of the Empire, who gave an emphatic warning against allowing political or social influences to interfere with the administration of defence matters, and the Government had all along been strenuously endeavouring to resist such influences. (Applause.) The Government could not afford to break the law in response to popular clamour, and it could not permit the administration of the Defence Department to be conducted by mass meetings, even though these meetings be led by the Leader of the Opposition on his way "to the steps of the throne itself." (Laughter.) So far as the agitation had been directed against the Government or Col. Robin—and he thought most people would admit that it had mainly been directed against the one or the other—it was (and he said this emphatically) the most unworthy and unwarranted political agitation he had ever known. (Cries of "No" and "You are wrong.") The Government had nothing to fear from a rehearing of the Knyvett case. (Cries of "Why don't you have it?") The Government had nothing to gain in resisting such a rehearing, except the maintenance of its own self-respect in impartially administering the law as it stood. In connection with this matter he might point out that Captain Knyvett had his attention drawn by the officer commanding the district to the fact that his letter was an improper one, and was urged to withdraw the offending matter, which he refused to do. He wondered whether the Knyvett committee had published that fact in the pamphlet which was supposed to contain the whole facts of the case. (Cries of "No.") As had been repeatedly pointed out by the Government, there was no provision in the law of the Dominion for granting a rehearing or an appeal in such cases.

A voice: "There ought to be."

Mr. Fowlds: It had been suggested that the difficulty could be got over by Colonel Robin demanding an inquiry into the serious charges that had been made against him, and that in his own interests he ought to make such a demand. He (the Minister) would here emphasise what had been pointed out on different occasions, that Colonel Robin had nothing whatever to do with the Knyvett case from before the time the inquiry was ordered. He had never objected to the holding of the inquiry that was now being demanded; indeed, he asked at once that such an inquiry should be held. (A voice: "Then it should have been held.") It was not, however, so easy to provide for such an inquiry, for the reason that military law and custom demanded that a Court of Inquiry can be composed only of officers of equal or of superior rank to the officer whose conduct was the subject of the inquiry, and they had no officers in the Dominion of equal or of superior rank to the Chief of Staff. All efforts to overcome this

difficulty had so far been unsuccessful, but the recent announcement made by the Prime Minister at Hokitika that Lord Kitchener had, when in New Zealand, been commissioned to select an officer of high rank to take charge of the New Zealand Defence Forces as Commandant, would in all probability result in the means being provided of overcoming the difficulty. When the new Commandant arrived in New Zealand he would be appointed one of a board to inquire into the charges made against Colonel Robin. He felt, therefore, that in due time Mr. Knyvett and his friends would have an opportunity of the fullest inquiry they could desire. (Hear, hear.)

A voice: "What about justice for Knyvett?"

The Minister added that an inquiry could be held only after Parliament had by statute made such a rehearing legal. The Government would give Parliament the opportunity of making this provision during the coming session.

Another demand that had been made, said Mr Fowlds, in connection with the matter, was that a Royal Commission be set up to consider the whole organization and administration of the Defence Department, but to set up such a Commission of Inquiry into an organization which the Government by passing the Defence Act of last session had decided to re-model from top to bottom, would surely be the height of political absurdity. (Hear, hear.) For several months during the Prime Minister's absence in England last year he had charge of the Defence Department, and was consequently brought into close personal touch with Colonel Robin, and he had no hesitation in saying that he was a careful and painstaking officer and one who would not be likely to inflict an injustice upon anybody. In conclusion, he would point out that neither the Prime Minister nor any other member of the Government had publicly discussed this question, except in reply to deputations, believing that it would be disastrous to the country to have the administration of the Defence Department dragged into the arena of party politics. (Applause.)

NORTH AUCKLAND RAILWAY.

The third thorny subject concerned the route of the North Auckland Railway. Though he had given very considerable attention to this subject, he had not hitherto publicly expressed any opinion on it. The suggestion that political considerations, had influenced the decision of the Minister of Public Works was absurd. As a matter of fact, it was Mr Alfred Harding, the Opposition candidate for the Kaipara seat at the last general election, who first directed the speaker's attention to the fact that motives other than the best interests of New Zealand were responsible for diverting the railway to the eastward of the route that would best serve the settlers and the country generally. In the session of 1908 a deputation of settlers from the North went to Wellington in support of a petition that a survey be made of what was considered to be a more central route than the one which was supposed to have been adopted. He was a member of the Public Petitions Committee that heard the evidence and considered the petition. He went to the Committee, if anything, prejudiced in favour of what he understood was the route recommended by the engineers of the Department, but the evidence and arguments in favour of the western route were so convincing that he resolved to take the first opportunity of visiting the district and investigating the matter for himself, so that he might form an unbiassed opinion from personal observation on the merits of the rival routes. When the deputation was in Wellington in connection with their petition they waited on the Hon. Mr Hall-Jones, who was then Minister of Public Works, and he knew from conversations he had with him at the time that he also was very much impressed with the representations made to him by the deputation. He therefore promised the deputation two things: (1) that a survey of the suggested route would be undertaken, and (2) that no constructional work would be done beyond the point of the suggested deviation until after a survey had been made and fully considered. The speaker took the first opportunity he had after the session of visiting the district. This was between Christmas Day and the end of 1908. On the journey he was accompanied by one of the engineers on the works, who was able to afford him very valuable information regarding the country, as well as the maps and the plans that had been supplied by the Public Works Department. After hearing the views of a large number of the settlers on both routes, and seeing a good deal of the country, he formed a very definite and decided opinion that the western

route was the one that would best serve the interests of the district, and be most remunerative to the Railway Department when completed. Though pressed to make a statement by the representatives of the two newspapers that accompanied him, he carefully refrained from doing so for two reasons, namely, that he did not want in any way to embarrass his colleague, the new Minister of Public Works, who had promised him (Mr Fowlds) to pay an early visit of inspection himself, in case his conclusions should be different from the speaker's. Further, he wanted to avoid the possibility of any delay in the progress of the works while the question of the route was being settled. On his return to Wellington, he refrained from expressing his opinion to the Hon. R. McKenzie regarding the rival routes, but drew his attention to two or three matters he had discovered in the course of his travels, viz.: (1) that in spite of the definite promise of his predecessor to have the suggested western route surveyed, no such survey had been made; (2) that in spite of the definite promise of his predecessor that the constructional work would not be proceeded with beyond the point of the proposed deviation until a survey had been made and considered, the work had actually progressed for a considerable distance beyond that point; and (3) that the maps supplied to him by the Department showed the proposed deviation as being longer and not so straight as the eastern route, whereas the appearances on the ground indicated that the western route would be shorter, straighter, and more easily constructed than the eastern route—(subsequent surveys had confirmed this impression); and (4) that the terminal point of the railway at McCarroll's Gap, as shown on the Public Works map, was some three miles to the eastward of the Gap proper. When the Hon. R. McKenzie, Minister of Public Works, himself examined the routes he arrived at the same conclusion as the speaker had done, and he really could not understand any unbiassed person who knew the country coming to any other conclusion.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

Those favouring the eastern route asked "if the evidence in favour of the western route is so conclusive, why not agree to submit the question to the Royal Commission which it is proposed to appoint to consider the route of the railway north of McCarroll's Gap?" The answer to this was that the time has gone by for such a commission, as the works have been proceeding for nearly twelve months along the route decided upon. The position taken up by the Auckland Press at the time of the visits of Mr. McKenzie and himself was the correct one. In order to prevent any delay in the prosecution of the work, they called upon the Minister of Public Works to make an early decision regarding the rival routes, and counselled all concerned to fall in loyally with the Minister's decision. He quoted the following from articles that appeared at the time. The "Auckland Star" of the 31st December, 1908, wrote as follows:—"If the Northern district settlers positively cannot agree about the choice of routes, their only safe course is to leave it to the Railway Department and the Minister in charge." The "New Zealand Herald," in its leading article on the subject on the 12th February, 1909, said: "We do not envy Mr. R. McKenzie his task, for he is quite certain to disappoint very bitterly one side or the other, and no kindly man likes to do that. . . . . Whatever Mr. McKenzie's decision may be, it should be loyally and cordially accepted, out of regard for general interests that are very much greater than any parochial interests can possibly be." Mr. Fowlds went on to say that he did not propose to say anything relative to the motives underlying the first decision to carry the line for nearly twenty miles along the foothills of the Waipu mountain range, where no traffic, either in goods or passengers, could be expected from the eastern side of the railway without the use of flying machines, and at the same time to miss the opportunity of tapping the navigable waters of the great Kaipara river, which will serve as a feeder to this main line in the same way as a branch line would do. He had only to add that if the Hon. Roderick McKenzie never did any greater service to his country than to settle this question in the way he had done, he will still deserve the undying gratitude of the people not only of North Auckland, but of the whole Dominion. (Applause.)

GOVERNMENT NOT SO POPULAR.

It had been suggested to him that the Government was not so popular as it had been. (A voice: "That's so.") That might be either the fault of the Government or the people who were discontented. (Laughter.) If the members of a Government did what

they believed to be right, they were bound to come into conflict with some people. (Applause.) Then, too, last year, the Government was compelled to go in for drastic retrenchment, and any Government that did that must incur a good deal of unpopularity. (Applause.) He contended that the record of the past four years for either administration or legislation was one that no Government need be ashamed of. (Applause.) The session of 1909 was looked upon as a record one for the important measures passed. Mr. Fowlds instanced the Native Land Act, Defence Act, State-guaranteed Advances Act, as illustrations of the good measures that had been passed into law last year. As to the Native Land Act, Mr. Fowlds recommended his hearers to read the report of the Hon. Dr. Findlay's address delivered at Whangarei to see what had been actually done. He mentioned that £500,000 a year was to be spent for the next few years in the purchase of native lands, and also stated 100 Government and 30 to 40 contract surveyors were at work. He said the papers were always crying out for settling the native lands, but if people would look around the country, they would see large areas of European-owned land also lying idle. They should treat the European and the Maori owner of unused land in much the same manner. (Applause.) There was another side to this question. What was going to happen when all the Crown land and native land was disposed of? Then would come the time of the land monopolist to exact his own terms. (Applause.) The Government of that day would require to bring in something of the principles of Lloyd George's Budget to ensure that the land was made available for the use of the people. (Applause.)

NOT WAR, BUT DEFENCE.

He had seen a paragraph going around the newspapers to the effect that one member of the Cabinet, and he, too, not a Southern member, was opposed to the Defence Act. He took that to mean himself. (Laughter.) Now, he wished to say straight out that he hated war—(applause)—and the military spirit that tended to develop that jingoism which was calculated to provoke war. (Applause.) Having said that, he wished to make it quite clear that he believed in the people being trained to defend their country. (Applause.) He saw no objection to physical education and training so long as the conscience of those people who were utterly opposed to war was not forced. Under the present Act such objectors could not be compelled to undertake miliary duties, but they would have to take up equivalent civil duties in lieu thereof. (Applause.)

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.

A very important piece of legislation passed last year was the Industrial Schools Act. This was intended to deal with degenerates without respect to age in regard to their detention. At present the maximum age was 21, and in the past it had been the custom in certain cases for degenerate young people to cause much trouble in the latter stages of their treatment, knowing that they would be legally free when they reached 21 years of age. Now they would have to restrain and behave themselves under the knowledge that they could be detained indefinitely if they did not do so.

The Minister also dealt briefly with the amendments to the Old Age Pensions Act, and the placing of the Death Duties Act on the Statute Book last session.

HOSPITALS AND CHARITABLE AID.

The Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act was one of the most important measures passed last session. The reform in the law effected by this Act was not so apparent in the Auckland district as in other parts of New Zealand; in Auckland the hospital and all the charitable institutions had all along been under the control of the one Board. In other parts of New Zealand they frequently had three or four Boards dealing with these institutions. He was glad to say that the new Act was now well under way, and though it was somewhat early to speak, there was every reason for believing that its provisions would be for the general advantage of the country. He must confess, however, that he was somewhat disappointed at the lack of interest manifested in the recent elections, but nevertheless he was bound to admit that the personnel of the Boards elected was undoubtedly excellent, and a very large proportion of the members had had previous experience of hospital and charitable aid work on the old boards. The responsibilities of the members were many and widely divergent, and should only be gradually assumed as the boards, so to speak, felt their way; but one responsibility that he hoped the boards would speedily as-

sume was that of a Board of Health. Just at present the majority of boards were considering the course of action they would pursue with regard to the Act, and the reports of the various policy committees that had been set up were being awaited with interest. With its policy clearly defined and well borne in mind, a board could gradually put into action those provisions of the Act that they may be ready to undertake in the order of their relative importance.

It was somewhat early yet to expect the Boards to set up special committees composed of members of the Boards and representatives of the various philanthropic societies, with a view to placing on a better footing the administration of charitable relief. At present the overlapping and abuse of charity occasioned by a somewhat indiscriminate doling out of alms, was having a very bad effect on a certain section of the community, and he sincerely trusted that by means of such committees, many of the defects of the present system would be obviated.

THE DECREASING BIRTH RATE.

To these committees of "Social Welfare," added the Hon. Mr. Fowlds, he hoped to see appointed a fair proportion of women, for there were many questions in connection with this important branch of social work that could be best settled by good and capable women. They should try to get women to come forward for work on committees, and also as district visitors, for in either of these capacities they could furnish a link in the system that could scarcely be filled with advantage by men. The subject of women and women's work called to his mind another matter important to this country, and to the Empire at large, and that was the decrease in the birth-rate. Without doubt that was a very serious danger to the nation, and had been aptly designated as "Race suicide." It was a subject that should be taken in hand by the patriot, the parson and the politician, and its evils should be thundered alike from pulpit and Press. There was no need to go into the details of that evil—rather should they try to suggest a practical remedy, and whether that remedy—or rather one of the many remedies needed—would be brought about by giving special assistance to maternity patients, or by other means, the matter was being well considered, and the Government shortly hoped to be able to offer to the expecting mother assistance in the hour of her need, so that it could not be said that the cost of medical and nursing attendance will any longer prevent a woman from facing the responsibilities and dangers of child-birth. And while considering the mothers, they must not forget the children. He hoped before long to have a practical system of medical inspection and treatment for school children presented to the Dominion. Perhaps some may scoff at what they may think Utopian the ideas he had propounded, but he trusted to be able to show the people of the Dominion that the schemes of the idealist were not necessarily illogical or impracticable. (Applause.)

MENTAL HOSPITALS.

Regarding the mental hospitals, which were under his control, the Minister said he had every reason to believe that there was complete harmony in the staffs in these institutions. This he thought was accounted for by the following facts:—(1) That good service was expected, and persons unsuitable to look after patients were weeded out. (2) That there is an improvement in the salaries, namely, of attendants increased by £7 10/ per annum, and of nurses by £5 per annum. The salaries of the engineers employed by the Department had also been raised, and those of the various artisans had been brought into line with existing awards. Special attention had been given to the training of attendants and nurses by lectures and demonstrations, the results being tested later on by examination, and registration certificates were awarded according to merit. All persons holding responsible positions in the Department had carried out their labours in a most conscientious and praiseworthy manner, and had been faithfully supported by their subordinates. The returns from the farms had largely assisted to support the patients, thereby tending to reduce the cost of maintenance. The value of the produce raised on the farms of the mental hospitals had increased from £14,300 in 1906, the year when he took charge of the Department, to rather over £17,200 in 1909. When the new mental hospital gets into working order, he expected a substantial addition to the revenue from this source. Regarding the new mental hospital, a misapprehensions seemed to have got into the minds of people that it was to replace existing institutions. This was entirely an erroneous idea. It would be neither possible nor expedient to adopt such a policy, but the new mental hospital was intended to meet demands for extensions for a good many years to come. All the exist-

ing institutions were about as large as they ought to be considering the limited area of land available for their use.

EDUCATION.

Education is one of the most important of the nation's concerns, continued the Minister, and it was perhaps not unnatural that nearly every one should consider himself as more or less of an educational expert. Indeed, a witty member of the recent Inspectors' Conference stated in a speech that "if you were to let off a gun in Lambton Quay you couldn't help hitting at least a hundred educational experts." But the institution and management of a complete national system of education was in reality one of the most complex problems that could be set to any man or body of men. So much was this the case that in England the solution of the problem had defied the efforts of Parliament, the Education Department, and the various public bodies that dealt with the matter. Here, however, no doubt, the problem was much simpler than at Home, and it might be fairly claimed that, at all events as far as the machinery provided by the State is concerned, the system was not far from complete. Portions of the machinery had not yet been set in operation, because the fact that in the same locality primary education, secondary education, and technical education were in the hands of two, three, or even four different authorities which had no special inducements to act in co-operation; and partly, no doubt, owing to the imperfections of the human agents prone to error in education as in every other department of human life. Briefly examining the machinery which the State provided he said (1) there were primary schools, where attendance was free and compulsory until the age of 14 (unless a child passes Standard V.); (2) a boy or girl who passed satisfactorily through the primary course and gained a certificate of proficiency, whether he gained a scholarship or not, is eligible for a junior free place, which might be held at a secondary school, technical school, or district high school for two years or more. If his work during that time was satisfactory, he was awarded a senior free place, which he might hold at the secondary school, technical school, or district high school for a further period, generally speaking, until he was nineteen—though that limit did not obtain in the case of a technical school. The Education Board scholarships and junior national scholarships provided boarding allowances for country pupils to attend secondary schools, and for those who did not gain scholarships they had 60 or 70 district high schools, so that even now very few country children qualified for it need be without secondary education of some kind; (3) our University Colleges were most democratic in character, the number of entrance scholarships was large, and even if a student did not gain a scholarship his fees were paid for him if he gained credit in the entrance examinations of the University, that was to say in the University Junior Scholarship examination; (4) if a student wished to become a teacher the training colleges were open to him, free, upon reasonable qualifications — nowhere else were the liberal allowances given to training college students that were given in New Zealand. Here, he was put to no expense whatever—elsewhere he had almost invariably to provide the whole or part of the cost of his training; (5) if a student passed successfully through his University course, they offered him inducements in the shape of New Zealand research scholarships (£100 a year and expenses for two or three years) to pursue research on some subject likely to be of commercial or industrial importance. He might, of course, obtain a Rhodes Scholarship, or an International Exhibition Scholarship entitling him to pursue his studies further in Europe. Several times had Rhodes and International Exhibition Scholarships been gained by Auckland students, but so far no Auckland candidate had offered himself or herself for a Research Scholarship. In the South the Research scholars had been doing good work, and from what he heard, it was not unlikely that discoveries or inventions of high commercial value might be the result of their researches. Even if that were not the case, he was sure they were doing right in training the young people to methods of research in connection with their own industries.

THE SYLLABUS.

Perhaps they would hear less now on the text of the primary school syllabus, as the General Educational Conference held in February last carried the following resolution: "That, in the opinion of this Conference, the syllabus of work for primary schools is based on sound principles, and is generally well adapted

to the needs of our pupils." The small amendments in the details of the syllabus that in the course of the discussion at the Inspectors' Conference were shown to be desirable, would, he expected, shortly be made. He had dwelt on the main features of the education system, because in the process of criticism attention was naturally directed to mere details, and the critics often could not see the wood for the trees. During the past year he had been experiencing the fact that it was much easier to be popular when your pocket was full of money than it was when you have to practise economy. (Laughter and applause.)

Attention had been directed lately to the withdrawal of the special capitation of 9d to school committees, to the lessened amount of last year's grants for the maintenance and rebuilding of schools, and to the withdrawal of the grant for public libraries. It was well understood now, he thought, that some retrenchment was absolutely necessary. An increase of £105,000 in the education vote for one year—and that a year of restricted revenue—was more than any Minister of Finance could be expected to provide, and it appeared to the Government that less harm would be done to education by reducing the expenditure in the directions named than in any other. The total amount saved by all the boards, last year, at least, had the special capitation to school committees been paid would have been enough to pay the special capitation; and all the boards last year, at least, had balances large enough to have paid the extra capitation that year, had they been so disposed. None of them, as far as he was aware, did so. The greater elasticity of the finances of the Dominion would enable this question of allowances to school committees to be dealt with in a broad way. The compulsory temporary withdrawal of the grants had at least had one advantage—it had called attention to the great disparity between the rates of the allowances paid to school committees in the various districts. While the average rate per pupil over the whole of New Zealand was in 1903 (before the 9d was granted) 5/7, the rate (exclusive of the 9d) was in 1908 5/3½, and in 1909 5/4½, a general reduction of 3½d and 2½d per head respectively. One Board had reduced the allowances by 2/4½ per head; some boards had slightly increased the rate, but had apparently imposed other burdens upon the school fund. In 1909 the rates varied from 3/5 to 6/9½ a head. Obviously, there was room for reform, but the question was beset with many difficulties.

BUILDING GRANTS.

The Minister went on to speak of the reduction of the maintenance building grants, which, it might be remarked, had nothing to do with new buildings—the cost of the latter being met by grants out of the Public Works Fund. It was necessary to emphasise the fact that the reduction was made by omitting the portion of the grant intended for the rebuilding of schools. This should have created no immediate difficulty to any board, for all boards had, or should have had, sufficient balances on this account to provide for all schools requiring to be rebuilt during the next two or three years. Unfortunately, some of the boards had diverted part of this money to new buildings, a purpose for which Parliament had not voted it, and so found themselves in a difficulty of their own making. The amount, he hoped, would be restored this year, and care would be taken that the boards did not suffer in the end any diminution of the amounts that should be available for the rebuilding as well as for the repair of schools. It would also be possible to restore the library vote this year. The railway concessions to teachers travelling to classes had already been restored, with certain safeguards which experience had shown necessary to prevent abuse.

SOME IMPORTANT WORKS.

Speaking of grants for free school books, the Minister said, in spite of the fears expressed in some quarters, the grants had proved to be ample for the purpose in every district where the system has been fully tried. During the last few years (i.e., while he had been Minister of Education) they could point to many important advances—e.g.: (1) Agricultural instruction had been taken up with more or less enthusiasm in a large number of country public schools, and a good scheme of agricultural education had been initiated by the aid of liberal grants in district high schools—one or two of the secondary schools were also giving attention to this important subject; (2) the training colleges had been fully developed by the provision of new buildings, the improvement of the staffs and the increased allowances to students; (3) the number of pupils receiving some form of secondary instruc-

tion had increased nearly twofold, and the increased capitation given had enabled the secondary schools which have little or no endowment to raise their efficiency by improving their staffing—several new secondary schools had been built out of public funds; (4) the research scholarships already mentioned had been established; (5) the inspection of private primary and secondary schools had been established on a regular basis; (6) a special school for defective boys had been established—he hoped soon to establish a similar school for girls; (7) the primary school teachers had had their salaries raised, and had been practically secured against any fall of salary due to causes other than incompetence and misconduct; (8) the superannuation benefits have been greatly increased in various ways; (9) the "School Journal" had been established, and its general popularity and the high approval of it expressed by competent authorities had more than justified the moderate expenditure upon it. (Applause.)

OPPOSITION BUGBEARS.

Another very important question, particularly to housewives and poorer people was the reduction in Customs duties on articles of food. The duties collected on ordinary articles of food in 1900 amounted to £289,436, whereas in 1908, on the same foodstuffs, owing to the reductions that the Government had made, the duties amounted to only £6650. (A voice: What about sugar?) Well, it is a halfpenny per pound less than it was four years ago. After all that had been done, still the Leader of the Opposition would say: "We have got a bad Government." There was only one Government that would be good in Mr Massey's opinion, and that would be one in which he was the leader. Mr Massey was a freeholder. (A voice: Quite right, too!) He (Mr Fowlds) was also a freeholder, but with taxation. The interests of the State had as much right to protection from the individual as the individual had for protection from the State. (Applause.) Replying to a recent speech by Mr Jas. Allen at Milton, regarding the graduated land tax, Mr Fowlds said the member for Bruce had been more than ordinarily amusing. Mr Allen claimed that the Government would have been in hot water over its Land Bill had it not been for the Opposition. Likewise. Mr Allen had taken much credit to himself with regard to the financial position, accusing the Government of stealing most of his suggestions. The Opposition was not quite such a happy family as they tried to make out, and he referred to the different opinions held on the Dreadnought gift and the feeling over Lord Kitchener's report on the defence of New Zealand.

Referring to the movement in favour of creating an Independent Labour party, the Minister said he had, by his advocacy of certain progressive legislation, brought on his head strong storms of criticism. He was anxious to do his very best in favour of the masses of this country. But he was convinced that it was in the best interests of the people of New Zealand as a whole that the Liberal and Labour party should hold together. The interests and claims of Labour, for many years, at any rate, would be best served by working with the Liberal party. He was willing to admit that the progressive sentiment of the people was a little ahead of that of Parliament. But the Government was at least as progressive as the Parliament of the country. If they wanted more, they must send more progressive members to the House of Representatives. He claimed that the radical sentiments in other countries were tending towards a measure that he had been advocating for many years ago. The passing of the Budget in Great Britain was an epoch-making event. If New Zealand for the past 18 years had had one clause of that Budget in operation, namely, that providing for the taking of 20 per cent. of the increased value of land for public purposes, it would have meant £1,180,767 per annum. The annual increase in land value had been nearly six millions. They were told by some people that that was the result of overvaluation, but the Government did not find that to be the case when it wanted to buy land at the valuations given. (Laughter.) They saw occasionally in Auckland newspapers complaints regarding injustice to Auckland. It was, however, recognised outside Auckland that it was a very difficult community to work for, or please—(laughter)—and for the last month or two he had been realising that. (Laughter.) That, however, did not apply to the electors of Grey Lynn. (Applause.) He had received such appreciation from the electors of Grey Lynn that he was willing to serve them and the Dominion so long as they wanted him to do so, and so long as he felt he was able to properly perform the services required. (Applause.)

Mr. Armstrong (secretary to the Knyvett Defence Committee) asked if Mr.

Fowlds would support the passing of a special Act providing for a new trial for Captain Knyvett.

Mr. Fowlds replied that if Mr. Armstrong would read in the newspapers the report of his speech he would see what he (the speaker) was prepared to do. (Laughter.)

In reply to Mr T. L. Thompson, the Minister said as soon as there was evidence of need for further accommodation at the Richmond School the matter would receive favourable consideration.

Mr. G. Sayers (ex-Mayor of Grey Lynn) moved:—"That this meeting accords a hearty vote of thanks to the Hon. Geo. Fowlds (Minister of Education) for his able address, and expresses its continued confidence in him as the representative of Grey Lynn, and in the Government of which he is a member."

Mr F. J. H. Ellisdon seconded the motion.

The Hon. Dr. Findlay, K.C. (Minister for Justice and Attorney-General), being asked by the chairman to address the meeting, said he would intervene for only a few moments before the pronouncement of a benediction on what had been a very successful address. He had only just landed from the Whangarei boat after a very calm passage, and he guessed, from what he had just observed, that the Minister of Education had had an equally easy passage. Mr Fowlds, however, was at his best when buffeting in a storm of adverse criticism. He was a typical sailor, but he had one fault—he was no trimmer. The Minister of Education would sooner sail by the stars in the heavens than by the loudest shouts from the shore. (Applause.) The Hon. Dr. Findlay added further tributes to the good qualities of the Hon. Mr Fowlds, and to his work as the head of the Education Department.

On being put to the meeting the motion was carried, there being only two or three dissentients.

After three cheers had been given for him, Mr. Fowlds expressed his thanks for the enthusiastic expression of continued confidence, and to Mr. Hayward for granting him the use of the Theatre. On his motion the Chairman was accorded a vote of thanks for presiding.

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