

The proposers of the bill contend that, as regards elementary education the tendency has been to institute a sort of rivalry between board schools and voluntary schools, and consequently to tempt the board schools to spend more than they are justified. As the school boards levy the rates they are capable of doing this if they are so minded.

This new local education authority is to be the county council or the county borough council.

The absolute control of the funds is given to the local education authority in order to insure their being distributed in proportion to the importance and necessities of the various branches of education.

The oversight of the education work within any area is to be handed over to the education committee appointed by the councils; but the spending of the money will be left in the hands of the councils, which alone possess the power of levying it.

No member of the education committee responsible for the educational work of the new authority is required by the bill to be a member of the local council; but Mr. Balfour has expressed his willingness to make it obligatory that a certain proportion of the members of the committee shall be members of the council which is the local education authority under the act.

The third part of the bill—that which deals with elementary education and the voluntary schools—is the main subject of the present contention between parties.

The provisions regarding the voluntary schools may be described in the following terms:

The government asks the managers of voluntary schools:

1. To provide buildings rent free.
2. To keep them in repair.
3. To make such alterations as the authorities, local and central, require.
4. To comply with the provisions for secular education.

The government also insists, on the other hand, that the local educational authority shall—

1. Absolutely control the secular education in all the voluntary schools.

2. Inspect the schools and audit their accounts.

3. Appoint two out of every six of the managers of the schools.

4. Veto the appointment or secure the dismissal of teachers if unfit on educational grounds.

In return for all this the government under the new bill provides for three-quarters of the cost of education from the State exchequer, leaving the local education authority to provide the remaining quarter out of the local rates.

This bargain is objected to on two grounds—

1. That the voluntary school managers appointed by the supporters or subscribers to the up-keep of the schools are in the majority of 4 to 2.

2. That rate aid is granted to denominational instruction.

These objections have been met by the reply that—

1. The secular instruction in the voluntary schools is absolutely controlled by the local education authority, and is further controlled, as to the standard of instruction, by the board of education.