CORRESPONDENCE

Relating to the admission of certain pupils of the Public School, Victoria, to the High School at the June, 1883, examination.

JNO. ROBSON,
Provincial Secretary.

Provincial Secretary's Office,
15th January, 1884.

The Provincial Secretary to the Superintendent of Education.

Victoria, B. C., 21st December, 1883.

Sir,—An article appeared in the "Evening Post" of the 23rd ultimo, referring to the High School in this City, in which it was stated that, "at the recent examination the Govern-"ment, it is said, were under the necessity of directing admission of pupils who had not quali-"fied, in order to keep up appearances."

The matter having been brought up in the Legislature on Tuesday last, an investigation was promised, and I have now to request you will report at your earliest convenience, informing me whether anything of the nature of the above-stated was done, and if so, under whose instructions.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) Jno. Robson,
Provincial Secretary.

The Superintendent of Education to the Provincial Secretary.

Education Office,
Victoria, 24th December, 1883.

Sir,—In reply to your communication of 21st instant, referring to an article which appeared in the "Evening Post," in which it was stated that, "at the recent examination the "Government, it is said, were under the necessity of directing the admission of pupils who had "not qualified, in order to keep up appearances," and asking whether anything of the nature of the above-stated was done, and if so, under whose directions, I have the honour to state that I alone am responsible for whatever has been done in respect to the admission of pupils into the High School, either on the result of the June, 1883, examination or of the examinations previous to it, during my term of office as Superintendent of Education, and that in my judgment, all pupils so admitted were fully qualified to enter the High School.

I am aware that the second master of that school was opposed to the admission of all but three of the nine boys admitted last June, but in my opinion his marking of the answer papers of pupils seeking admission into his division has always been too severe, and I have, as a consequence, overruled his judgment on several other occasions, besides that of the June, 1883, examination.

In December, 1882, I addressed the following letter to the Principal of the Boys' School, on the result of the examination then held:

"Monday, December 18th, 1882.

"Dear Sir,—Enclosed find the result of the examination lately held, with the list of those "who have passed for the High School. So far as I have looked over the papers, I think the "marking is more strict than I would have made it, and I do not therefore adhere to the 60 per "cent., but consider those who have obtained a certain number of marks as having passed the "required standard, and I have done the same for both schools.

"Yours truly,
"C. C. McKenzie,
Superintendent of Education."

J. McKenzie, Esquire, Public School, Victoria.

These papers were subsequently re-examined and re-marked by myself.

While not re-marking the papers of the June examination, I considered the marking of the High School Masters as too severe generally, and notably so in the case of the marking for reading, in which the six boys who would have been rejected, had but 10, 12, 15, 20, 25, 35 marks allowed them out of 50 marks possible, 35 being the highest allotted to any pupil and in this case only, 30 being also the next highest, and in one case only also.

As a confirmation of the correctness of my judgment in admitting these six boys, I beg to state that in the examination just held of the Junior Division of the High School, and in which 34 pupils were examined, these six occupy the following places in order of merit—8th, 17th, 21st, 24th, 29th and 30th, while at the same time the other three admitted with them, and respecting whose qualification no question has been raised, occupy the 12th, 19th and 27th places.

I beg to state further that, even if I had been bound to defer to the opinion of the second master of the High School, I would have felt justified in departing from the standard of admission on his basis, considering that the High School is but a continuation of the Public School, and that the over-crowding of pupils in the 3rd, 4th and 5th divisions of the Boys' School was such that no effective teaching could be done in them, and that it was an imperative necessity in the interest of the whole school that pupils should be advanced into the less crowded rooms, even at the risk of entailing a little more work on the teachers of those rooms and of reducing the average percentages of their pupils at examinations.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) C. C. McKENZIE,
Superintendent of Education.

The Provincial Secretary to Mr. Offerhaus.

VICTORIA, B. C., 3rd January, 1884.

SIR,—You will doubtless have noticed that the attention of the Government has been called to an article which appeared in the "Evening Post," intimating that, at the last mid-summer examination of the Public Schools in this city, pupils not properly qualified were admitted to the High School, for the purpose of keeping up appearances.

Having promised the Legislature that an examination would be made into the circumstances, I requested the Superintendent of Education to report upon the subject, and extracts from his report are here submitted for your information:

"I have the honour to state that I alone am responsible for whatever has been done with "respect to the admission of pupils into the High School, either on the result of the June, "1883, examination, or of the examinations previous to it, during my term of office as "Superintendent of Education, and that in my judgment, all pupils so admitted were fully "qualified to enter the High School.

"I am aware that the second master of that school was opposed to the admission of all "but three of the nine boys admitted last June, but in my opinion his marking of the "answer papers of the pupils seeking admission into his division has always been too severe, "and I have, as a consequence, overruled his judgment on several other occasions, besides "that of the June, 1883, examination.

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"'DEAR SIR,—Enclosed find the result of the examination lately held, with the list of "'those who have passed for the High School. So far as I have looked over the papers, I "'think the marking is more strict than I would have made it, and I do not, therefore, adhere "'to the 60 per cent., but consider those who have obtained a certain number of marks, as "'having passed the required standard, and I have done the same for both schools.

"'Yours truly,
(Signed) "'C. C. McKENZIE,
"'*Superintendent of Education.*

"*J. McKenzie, Esq., Public School, Victoria.*"

"These papers were subsequently re-examined and re-marked by myself.

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"I beg to state further that, even if I had been bound to defer to the opinion of the "second master of the High School, I would have felt justified in departing from the standard "of admission on his basis, considering that the High School is but a continuation of the public "school, and that the over-crowding of pupils in the 3rd, 4th and 5th divisions of the boys' "school was such that no effective teaching conld be done in them, and that it was an impera-"tive necessity in the interest of the whole school that pupils should be advanced into the less "crowded rooms, even at the risk of entailing a little more work on the teachers of those rooms "and of reducing the average percentages of their pupils at examinations."

As you are the teacher more particularly referred to by the Superintendent, and as I am credibly informed, you made certain statements publicly at the time, having an important bearing upon the point at issue, I have to request that you will report to me upon the whole subject, at your earliest convenience.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) Jno. Robson,
Provincial Secretary.

Mr. Offerhaus to the Provincial Secretary.

Victoria, B. C., 7th January, 1884.

Sir,—In reply to your letter dated 4th January, 1884, I beg to state that I have noticed an article relating to the admission of boys into the High School, and being asked to report to you, I take the liberty to state that the accusations made by the Superintendent of Education against me are not true in my opinion.

First, Mr. C. C. McKenzie states "the second master of the High School was opposed to the admission of all but 3 of the 9 boys admitted last June."

I was not opposed to it, as I, being second master, had no right to interfere with the action taken by my superior officer, in lowering the percentage for those six boys.

Secondly, he states my marking has always been too severe. It may be in his opinion, but not in mine. I marked strictly and justly. I said "may be in his opinion," which I doubt very much, for in all the three years and a half I have had the honour of being second master in the High School, and during which time I examined the highest divisions of the public school of Victoria seven times, he never stated to me, either in writing or verbally, that I marked too severely, which would have been the proper course to take, he being my superior.

Thirdly, he writes to Mr. John McKenzie:—"I do not therefore adhere to the 60 per cent.," but as Mr. C. C. McKenzie mentioned percentage, it may be not out of place to refer to his Public School Report, 1882-83, page 146, chapter 3, paragraph 2, where he says:—

"In order that a candidate may obtain admission to the High School, the aggregate of his marks must amount to at least 60 per cent. of the total marks assigned for all the subjects of examination, and at least 30 per cent. must be obtained in each subject. Candidates will not be admitted who fail to gain 50 per cent. of the parsing and analyzing questions in the grammar paper."

If a pupil does not obtain 50 per cent. of the parsing and analyzing questions in the grammar paper he will not be admitted. Masters *Charles Barron*, *William Smith*, *Henry Short*, *Arthur Engelhardt*, failed in obtaining that percentage in parsing.

Again, a pupil must have 30 per cent. of each subject. Master *Robert Clanton* failed to get 30 per cent. in arithmetic; and lastly, a pupil must obtain 60 per cent. of the total marks

Master *Frank Stannard*, and all the boys before mentioned, failed to obtain that percentage; and yet the Superintendent takes for granted my marking was too severe.

Those papers being re-examined by any one else would be declared not up to the mark. What else, then, could my decision be but, "not passed?"

In the case of the marking for reading, I beg to state that I have nothing to do with that, as the Principal of the High School conducted that part of the examination.

In regard to the other statements which he made, I beg not to give my opinion, as they do not directly deal with me.

As you were credibly informed "I made certain statements publicly at the time, having an important bearing upon the point at issue," I must state that I did so.

In reading out the names of the candidates admitted into the High School last midsummer, I mentioned three as having passed according to the standard, and by permission of the Superintendent of Education the other six were declared as passed, as being near to the percentages which form the standard.

Hoping that these explanations satisfy you.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) R. OFFERHAUS,

Second Master High School, Victoria.