

Hon. Mr. Isitt.

RELIGIOUS EXERCISES IN SCHOOLS.

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A BILL INTITULED

AN ACT to provide for the Performance of certain Religious Exercises in Schools. Title.

5 WHEREAS it appears desirable in the interests of public education to include in the curriculum of public schools, Native schools, secondary schools, and technical high schools religious exercises of a simple character which shall not include any instructions in the tenets, dogma, or creed peculiar to any religious society or denomination : Preamble.

10 BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

1. This Act may be cited as the Religious Exercises in Schools Act, 1926, and shall come into force on the first day of January, nineteen hundred and *twenty-seven*. Short Title.

15 2. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Education Act, 1914, or in any other Act, there shall be allotted each day at the opening of every public school, Native school, secondary school, and technical high school a period of not less than fifteen minutes and not more than twenty minutes for the performance of religious exercises as hereinafter set out : Part of school hours to be allotted to performance of religious exercises.

20 Provided that on one day in each week there may be substituted patriotic exercises as prescribed by regulations.

3. The religious exercises to be performed in accordance with the *last preceding* section shall consist of— Nature of religious exercises.

- 25 (a.) The recitation of the Lord's Prayer ; and
(b.) The singing or recitation of a hymn from a hymnal to be compiled by the Education Department after consultation with the representatives of the Christian Churches ; and

(c.) The reading by the teacher or pupils of a Bible lesson from a manual compiled in the manner prescribed in the *last preceding* paragraph, such reading to be without interpretation or comment other than is reasonably necessary for grammatical explanation. 5

No child or teacher to be compelled to attend.

4. Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this Act, no child shall be required to attend the performance of religious exercises as herein provided if the parent or guardian of such child notifies the head teacher in writing that he has conscientious objection thereto, nor shall any teacher be required to take part in the performance of such religious exercises if he has conscientious objection thereto, and notifies the Board or other controlling authority of the school in writing to that effect. 10

Special provision where all teachers object.

5. In case all the teachers of a school notify the Board or controlling authority that they have conscientious objection to the exercises, it shall be competent for the School Committee or controlling authority to nominate such person as they deem fit to conduct the exercises. 15

Where religious exercises already performed same may be continued.

6. If at any school to which this Act applies it has been the practice prior to the commencement of this Act to conduct at the opening of the school religious exercises in a form other than that prescribed herein, the controlling authority of the school may authorize the continuance of the first-mentioned exercises in lieu of those prescribed by this Act. 20