

*Education Amendment Bill (No 2) — First Reading, 30 June 2010*

**Hon Sir ROGER DOUGLAS (ACT):** ACT will support the Education Amendment Bill (No 2). Having said that, I agree a hundred percent with Kelvin Davis when he said that this bill does little and certainly does not deal with the significant problems we have in the education system. Given that it is the third Government bill on education, one would have hoped that it would do a lot more. If we were to give it a mark out of 100, I suppose it would get a two or three in terms of importance—if we stretched it. There is absolutely nothing in this bill that will do anything to improve the quality of education. There is nothing in this bill that will do anything to help the 30 percent of kids who at the present time leave school with a poor education, and who are unable to read or write adequately.

The tragedy is that when we look at schools in poor areas, we see that that percentage is much higher. It is the poor who are getting the rawest deal. There is absolutely nothing in this bill that will solve the problem we have in South Auckland, where 10 of the schools are currently manned by police. I understand that that scheme has been recently moved into the Bay of Plenty area. There is nothing in this bill that will help the children who this year went to secondary school for the first time at a school in South Auckland, a decile 5 or 6 school, who had a test where one of the questions asked: “If you have 36 apples and subtract 27 apples, how many do you have?”, and one in four children got that wrong.

There is something terribly wrong with our education system, and it is about time that this House addressed the real issues that we are faced with and not these issues, which are largely technical in manner. The fact is that unless a family has the money to shift to another zone and buy a house in it, or can pay twice, they have no choice in this country. I think we need to do something about that. This bill does extend choice slightly. It allows for the children of parents who went to particular schools to be enrolled at those schools, but that in itself will create some anomalies, as well. The Education and Science Committee might like to think about that. I think of my own situation where I had a son who went to Auckland Grammar School and a daughter who went to Epsom Girls Grammar School.

My son’s son will now be able to go to Auckland Grammar School, but I take it that my daughter’s son will not qualify. On the other hand, my daughter’s daughter will now be able to go to Epsom Girls Grammar School, but my son’s daughter will not.

Overall, it is time that we got to grips with the education system in New Zealand. The education system absorbs the total amount of money we raise from GST, and I do not think we are getting a particularly good return. In many ways, the problems we have now were 70 years in the making, and I cannot for the life of me see why we persist with a system that has failed for 70 years. I ask why we do not think again. Thank you.