

**A PAID VICE-CHANCELLOR OF
THE UNIVERSITY.**

THE COUNCIL'S VIEW.

On Wednesday a deputation waited on the Minister of Public Instruction, and opposed the proposal that there should be a paid vice-chancellor of the Melbourne University, who should be regarded as its administrative head. Yesterday a counter deputation from the council, consisting of Dr. Madden, Mr. R. L. J. Ellery, and Mr. A. Harper waited on Dr. Pearson to support the proposal.

Dr. Madden stated that the council attached as much importance to the proposal that there should be a paid vice-chancellor, and a salary for such an official provided, as it did to the other requests for pecuniary assistance which it had recently made to the Government. He explained that the proposal had been adopted by the council after the most mature deliberation, and after the greatest possible effort in beating about to find an efficient remedy for the defects or evils known to exist in the University. When the proposal was first submitted to the council, it was discussed very fully, and finally the statute embodying it was passed, with only three dissentients, and forwarded on to the senate. The interest displayed in the statute was unprecedented, and when it came before the senate it was doubtful if there had ever been such a large attendance at the sittings of that body as there was when the statute came on for consideration. After a good deal of discussion the statute was finally carried by a very considerable majority. The professors then, through their representatives, waited on him, and informed him that they recognised that they had been defeated on the principle of the statute in the senate, and that they now desired, if possible, to have their views embodied in the measure. Naturally the council did not at first see why this should be done, as the professors had been beaten in the senate. However, as the professors undertook that if the matter were referred to a committee before whom they could put forward their views, and that if after that the statute was adopted by the committee, they would loyally support whatever was the outcome of the deliberations of the committee. The committee consisted of an equal number of those supporting and opposing the proposal, and several members who were supposed to be indifferent to either side. The committee

sat several nights, and, after hearing the views of the professors, made a number of amendments on the statute at their instance. As the professors had represented that they would loyally support the amended statute, he at their request moved that it should be adopted by the council without any discussion at all. This was done, and the measure was passed by a large majority. The feeling of the council, or rather of those who had had the longest experience of University administration, was that owing to a number of scandals which had arisen, or what had become scandals through the inquiries which were held by the council, it was necessary that there should be an improvement made in the administrative branch of the institution if the University was to be efficiently administered. It had been said by the other side that if the council could not control the affairs of the University as at present its members should resign, but that had been said flippantly, as those who constituted the council were not gentlemen who had not honestly tried to perform their duties, or who had not the interests of the University at heart. The council attached the greatest importance to the proposal that there should be a paid vice-chancellor, and placed it second to none in regard to the other requests which had been made by it. He was astonished that two of the professors should have waited on the Minister the previous day to oppose the proposal after what had taken place.

Mr. A. HARPER read the following statement of the views of the council :—

“As representing the council of the University we desire once more to bring under your notice the necessity for the appointment of a paid vice-chancellor. From your reply to the deputation which you received two weeks ago, it is felt that this necessity is in danger of being greatly under-estimated. Instead of being one of the things which may most easily be postponed, the University, as represented by the two governing bodies, the council and senate, regard this appointment as the step upon which the future of the University most depends. After very protracted debates, the proposal for the appointment of such an officer was passed by a large majority of the council, only two members voting with the chancellor against it, and in the senate after a three days' debate before the largest number of members present during recent years, the proposal of the council was approved in principle, and referred to a committee. In the committee again, on which the professors were ably represented a general understanding was come to, from which only one member of the committee dissented, that the proposal of the council, with the modifications now embodied in it should be recommended to the senate for adoption, and that report was finally approved by the senate with only 10 dissentient voices. Finally, the repre-

representatives of the professors agreed to accept this decision, and it was understood that collectively they would offer no more opposition. To secure such practical unanimity in regard to so difficult a question—a question, moreover, in which the interests of so many different bodies are involved—very strong reasons had to be adduced on behalf of the council, and we desire to bring before you the following outline of their chief grounds for pressing for this appointment:—

1. They feel that without it they are powerless to prevent the recurrence of the troubles, complaints, and difficulties which have so largely impaired the efficiency of the University in the past. In so feeling, moreover, they can claim to be perfectly disinterested, for the change will in no way advance the interests or increase the powers of the council. The new officer would exercise no powers which the council does not already possess, and there is no proposal that he should exercise the powers he would possess independently of the council. All that is desired is that he should gather up and render effective powers which the council already had, but which they cannot effectively use without such an officer, and that they shall no longer be held responsible for matters which are in fact, though not in theory, entirely beyond their control.
2. There is at present no unity in the administration of the University, and there has been very little co-operation. The office and the professorial board, and in large measure the various faculties also, have in the past been acting independently of each other in many respects, and in large part even without reference to the council. This has resulted in a great deal of clashing, and in many complaints, such as that one school or faculty has been advanced at the expense of the others, or that the plans formed by the various bodies have been framed without the slightest reference to the general interests of the University. The council, of course, does what it can to redress these inequalities when they are noticed, but, except in very rare cases, they have not, and cannot have, sufficient knowledge of the internal arrangements of the various branches into which the University is now divided, to perceive them. This state of things has resulted in serious complications, which have lowered the reputation of the University, and it is felt that one of the most pressing needs at this moment is that there should be some officer whose duty it shall be to know what the needs of each school are by sitting in the council, the professorial board, and on the faculties, and who shall in all of these bodies represent the interests of the whole University, as no one at present does, and who shall have control of the office, so that it shall be worked in harmony with the whole.
3. There is urgent need that there should be some officer with power to inquire into the general working of the various departments, and who by his position would be able to meet and at once reply from personal knowledge to any allegations of unreasonable delay or inefficiency in the performance of university work. At present the normal state of things is that the council receive information as to the existence of such causes of complaint from angry letters in the newspapers; in other words, they learn that things have gone wrong only when a public scandal has emerged or threatens to emerge. It may be said that the registrar should keep the council informed

as to such matters. But under the present conditions, if the registrar were to attempt to do so, he would have to rely mainly on hearsay evidence, for he is not empowered to ask either for information or for explanation from any officer of the University, except those under his immediate control, and the only result of his efforts would be that the scandal would arise earlier in the form of a conflict between the registrar and the professors. The council therefore feel assured that the only way to change the present most unsatisfactory state of things is to appoint an officer of such dignity and importance that no one could feel humiliated when asked by him for information or explanations, and to whom all who had any complaint to make could come. In such hands most of these difficulties would disappear as soon as they were mentioned, and in cases where the evil was inveterate, the council, acting upon the reports of such an officer, would, for the first time in the history of the University, be in a position to act with vigour against the offender. As for the interests of the professors, the council is persuaded that they will be more entirely conserved by this appointment than by any other step that could be taken. Not only will the professors be indirectly benefited, inasmuch as the University administration would thereby be greatly improved, but their position would be directly and immediately strengthened by it. At present, at their own ardent desire, and owing to their own feverish exertions, they have no representative on the council. If they wish to have their opinions represented, they must either send a deputation, or wait till the president of the Professorial Board is summoned to attend the council. Further, if any complaint is made against any one of them, the discussion of it must begin and go on in the presence of the reporters. Thus every trifling difficulty of that kind receives an importance which it may not deserve, and which must be most vexatious to the professor immediately concerned. In regard to both these points the appointment of a paid vice-chancellor would supply a complete remedy. Having a seat on the council, and being president of the professorial board, he would be able to put the council into a position to discuss trifling charges at once, he would supply the link which is now wanting between the exclusively governing body of the University and the working staff, and he would thereby open the way for a much more harmonious and effective conduct of affairs. In some quarters apprehensions have been expressed to the effect that the status of the professors would be disastrously changed for the worse by this appointment. But in that view we, as representing the council, cannot at all concur. The position of the professors in the Melbourne University is almost unique in its irresponsibility. They have an absolutely safe life tenure, they have no competition as one of their advocates has pointed out, they are absolutely independent of the fees of the students, and though there are regulations giving some powers of inquiry to the council, for want of an officer of the kind proposed these powers cannot be effectively exercised. In all respects but the last the council have no wish to interfere with them, but they are clearly of opinion that, in return for the privileges of their position, the professors may well submit to a degree of supervision which must, in the very nature of the case, be much less strict and exacting than that under which almost all