

The Advertiser
 September 26th
 1913

EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY.

ADDRESS BY MR. MANSBRIDGE.

An enthusiastic audience assembled at the School of Mines and Industries on Thursday evening, when Mr. A. Mansbridge, M.A., secretary and founder of the Workers' Educational Association of England, spoke on "A democratic highway of education."

Mr. L. Grayson presided, and in introducing the lecturer, referred to the success of his work in England.

Mr. Mansbridge, who was received with applause, referred in appreciative terms of the educational institutions grouped on North-terrace. He thought the University, School of Mines, Art Gallery, and Public Library were doing much for the education of the State, and to meet its needs. He desired to sketch an ideal educational system. No State could at one step bring into existence an ideal educational system, but if they kept a lofty ideal before them they would gradually move up towards it. In England the educational ladder, which Huxley saw years ago in vision, and which stretched from the gutter to the University, had unfortunately contracted. It was perhaps natural. Not many people could climb the same ladder at one time, but in the educational ladders there had been many important rungs missing. He was not going to speak of a ladder, but of a broad democratic highway. He did not expect to see such a highway made in his time. It would be a difficult road to construct, and would involve much self-sacrifice, but he believed it would be established. There would be the primary school, the secondary school, and the University. He proposed to sketch some of the byways which would lead into the broad highway. In England it was compulsory to send a child to school from the age of five till thirteen, and powers were vested in governing bodies to keep a child at school till he was fourteen in some circumstances. He thought five years was too young an age for a child to be compelled to attend school. But in England there were many homes in poor neighbourhoods which were not fit for a child to be in. Some mothers had to go out to work, and the children of such homes were better in the kindergarten than left to themselves. One of the saddest things he had ever heard of in his life was of a child, a baby, who had to be kept in a cellar, because her mother had to go out to work. If she began to cry a girl was sent to put soothing drugs into her mouth.

Referring to primary education, Mr. Mansbridge asked if fourteen was a proper age for a child to leave school. If they were to ask some of the well-to-do people of England that question in regard to their own children, they would say, "A child only begins his education at that age." Yet they were still struggling in England to have the compulsory school age raised to fourteen. But they had the half-time system there, which permitted a child to work half a day and go half time to school. He was hopeful that this would soon be swept away. There were even worse conditions than these in some cases. He had heard of boys working 40 hours a week, and also attending school. What could they expect these boys to develop into? He had heard in Australia of children milking cows in the morning for some hours and then going to school. ("Shame.") They were striving for legislation in England which would prohibit a child's working for profit during the school-going period. His educational highway would be through the future with well-fed, well-clothed, well-cared for children. (Applause.) They had already done great things by the medical systems of the schools. He was not irreverent when he spoke of the changes achieved in the world as wonderful as the miracle of the resurrection. They were in school at that time, and there were no dull children. If they depart from that child was adapted for something that would be discovered, and something which he was interested in, and they would find no dull child, and must have health. He qualified to learn, would soon come when they had the time. (Applause.)

Secondary schools said the lecturer, were of great importance to any community. In England they had municipal secondary schools, which corresponded, he believed, with the high schools of Australia. They had the public schools also, such as Winchester and Eton, a glorious public school. They were founded for poor people. In the early days a person had to be extraordinarily poor to get into Eton. But gradually it became the custom for the sons of wealthy people to go to these schools, and for the sons of the poor to work in the field. At length Eton was open to anyone, and now it cost £200 a year to go to a school of this kind. They were glorious schools, many of them with a splendid record. He did not wish to take away from the great public schools any one of the advantages and facilities which they offered, but they wanted to extend these so that they should be more widely available. There were now nearly 900 secondary municipal schools in England receiving Government grants, and these had to provide at least 25 per cent. of free places for pupils from the primary schools who won scholarships. What they really wanted, however, was the school-leaving age raised to 16. Then they would have the proper unity of the primary and the secondary school. It might be necessary in some districts and in connection with some industries—fishing and rural callings, for instance—to acquire a knowledge of the industry before the age of 16 was attained. He would not place any barrier in the way of this being done, but the child should be kept under the control of the educational authorities during the period, and that training he received should be educational, and should not be for the purpose of profit. When the age of 16 was reached there would be some in the schools who would show an aptitude for education that would lead them into the universities. There were many people who were not fitted for university training. If they only had in the universities of England those who had the power to do work, these institutions would be of vastly greater value to the country than they really were. There were too many "spoon-fed" students there. He wanted to see the universities open to all, but not to see all go there. Equality of opportunity should be their watchword. (Applause.) He believed the time was rapidly coming when people who had made money would give largely for the development of education and the extension of opportunity. He did not say that was his ultimate ideal. He hoped private benefactions would not dry up in any degree public funds voted for similar purposes. They must give the opportunity for development to the human nature God had put into the world. When the highways of education were complete up to the University they would have to provide other means for adult education for those who had not attended the universities. They were going to be governed by democracy in England, it was said. He prayed that it might not be an ignorant democracy. There were some politicians who tried to make their own careers, and there were some churchmen who wanted to make their own careers, instead of doing the work they were there for. They must have an educated democracy. Education, however, was not knowledge; it was the cultivation of a taste for knowledge. (Applause.)

The Register
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THE EDUCATIONAL HIGHWAY.

"EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL."
 LECTURE BY MR. A. MANSBRIDGE, M.A.

At the School of Mines on Thursday night Mr. A. Mansbridge, M.A., delivered a stirring lecture on the "Democratic highway of education." Among the appreciative audience was a fair sprinkling of school teachers.

Mr. Mansbridge said he was exceedingly pleased with the public institutions on North terrace, and especially glad to note that the University and School of Mines were together. In the educational block on North terrace were the germs of great things. He intended that night to sketch an ideal, and speak of education as a democratic highway. He would take as his subject education in England as it was at the present day. People who had the welfare of the State at heart desired educational equality for every person. He emphasized the necessity for an ideal. The word "highway" expressed something broad and beautiful. Huxley had said there should be a ladder from the gutter to the university, but the term had since

been sadly misused, and instead of expanding the educational ladder had contracted. In England the ladder generally had about half the rungs missing. During his (the speaker's) lifetime the highway would never become an accomplished fact, but it was the plain duty of some of them to work at it. (Applause.) The lecturer proceeded to trace the highway through the primary and secondary schools and the universities of England. Conditions in some of the congested areas in large English cities were so bad that it had become absolutely imperative that the educational authorities should step in and take charge of children under five years of age. Babies were turned out of their homes because their mothers had to go to work. The speaker related one particular case that had come under his personal notice. Babies were ranged around in a cellar, and when one cried a little girl, a "baby minder," was told to place a drug-saturated pad in its mouth. Some people looked upon schools as institutions the function of which was to turn out a good labour product at 13 or 14 years of age. In reply to a question he had put to a professor of philosophy, the latter had said that if the school-leaving age were raised to 16 years the parents would suffer for a while, but within a few years the increased power and strength of the child would produce results that would more than recompense them for the temporary loss. Boys in England worked 40 hours a week, in addition to going to school, and since coming to Australia he had heard whispers that boys milked cows in the early hours of the morning. In England they were beginning to feed the children who could not get sustenance in sufficient quantities at their homes. The school doctor was being called in to deal with disease in children. Education was the force which lifted men to high places. The municipal secondary school in England, which was equal to the high schools in South Australia, was only a recent institution. Then there were the public colleges, which were founded mainly by some religious order, and were the results of the days when the monks conducted the education of the people. Those were a glorious collection of schools. They were not by any means perfect, but they produced a splendid type of man. They did not want to take away from those schools the privileges they possessed, but they in England wanted to give the same advantages to all. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge based their curriculum on that of the public schools, which was mainly classic. Therefore the students of the secondary schools, where the curriculum was scientific, were severely handicapped by that. There were now nearly 900 secondary schools in England receiving Government grants, and they had to reserve at least 25 per cent. of places for pupils from the primary schools who won scholarships. What they really wanted was the raising of the school-leaving age to 16, which would result in the proper unification of the primary and secondary schools. The lecturer went on to describe what he really meant by raising the school-leaving age. He did not actually mean that the boy or girl should be kept at school until that age was attained. In some classes of work (say in a fishing village or in rural districts) it might be necessary to obtain some experience of the work before 16 was reached. He had not the slightest objection to the employer making a profit out of the boy, but the lad should be receiving education until he reached the age of 16. He should be under the control of the educational authorities, who should be in a position to certify to that effect. He had been pleased to note that South Australia had not divorced technical from university education. Many university men were infinitely more suited for trench digging than endeavouring to painfully climb the educational ladder. The university should be open to all; there should be no distinction. (Applause.) Throughout the world to-day there was a great movement for equality of opportunity for education. All parties of men agreed with the justice of the movement. Equality of educational opportunity would mean men stronger in mind, body, and spirit. When they got the highway of education completed up to the university they would have to work for the development of other means for adult education. When the highway was developed it would be better for the world at large. He had an ideal that the time would come when the universities, as the growing centres of the nation, would be sending out its "nerves"—equipped men—into all the professions and trades. The lecturer concluded with a few straight words to politicians, several of whom were present, and appealed to them to bring about that happy consummation—an educated democracy.

At the close of his address Mr. Mansbridge answered a number of questions.