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TUTORIAL CLASSES

DEMOCRACY AND CULTURE

WORKERS AS BRILLIANT SCHOLARS

PROFESSOR ATKINSON'S LECTURE.

Before a large audience at the Trades Hall last night, Professor Meredith Atkinson (director of tutorial classes at the Sydney University) delivered a lecture on "The Objects of the Workers' Educational Association." Mr. T. Ryan (president of the South Australian Workers' Educational Association) occupied the chair.

The Professor, who was listened to with deep interest, pointed out that the movement started 11 years ago, when a few straight-thinking working men and university men met together and decided upon the scheme. To-day it was one of the greatest movements of the world. It was attached to all the universities of the United Kingdom, and comprised something like 2000 labor and educational organisations. The movement was now rapidly spreading in Australia. Canada and South Africa were asking for it, and France and Germany were looking on and asking what was it all about. The aim of the Workers' Educational Association was to afford a higher education to the working classes. It was a truism to say that democracies could become tyrannical, and the one way to defeat the dangers attendant upon democracy was to educate the democracy. Knowledge could be an end in itself, and could produce an inner satisfaction which was sufficient excuse for its real pursuit if it served a social need. In this respect it could be noted that, if knowledge were gained at a university, the intellectual atmosphere of the place often caused it to be acquired in a spirit of social service, whereas knowledge gained at a technical school had too much of the bread-and-butter spirit about it. It was certain that the democracy ought to come into contact with the highest knowledge and the best studies that the human mind could provide, for through knowledge alone must truth come.

Classes of working men were instructed by university tutors in certain subjects, mostly economics and literature, and it had been repeatedly shown that working men, after a three-year's course, were capable of reaching the standard of the first-class honors man at Oxford. The tutorial classes met once a week, and they generally lasted two hours. The first part of the evening was devoted to a simple exposition by the tutor of the subject under discussion, and the next half was devoted to the questioning of the tutor by the students who were invited and encouraged to make inquiries. It was only when one was a member of a class that one could see and realise the earnestness of the students studying economics or industrial history. The students were asked to write an essay each fortnight. This to most working men was a very difficult task. Many had never written a letter since they left school. Some were underpaid, compelled to work overtime, and had domestic troubles, yet they were so eager to learn that they kept at the essay writing, with the result that he could name many instances where some of the finest essays he had ever read had been turned out by such students. He, with all his university studying, would feel proud to attach his signature to many of the essays which had been written by working men who before joining the tutorial classes had had practically no education. He held that the classes were turning out quite a new type of Labor thinker and leader.

The idea was practical, despite what might be said to the contrary. The very men who grumbled at the errors of the working class were those who tried to stifle the desire of the workers for education. He had been in Australia only a short while when he realised that the movement had grown to such an extent that it was beyond the control of one man. It was now impossible for him to make more than a cursory glance of the movement in the Commonwealth. The workers of this nation had more leisure than the British workmen, and there were far more opportunities for him to make profitable use of that time. With this fact in view he looked forward to the rapid development of the classes. In Sydney they had started the classes, and there was a strong demand for more. He had even received letters from the backblocks asking for guidance in the study of industrial history. The corresponding branch, he predicted, was going to be a very large concern in itself, especially as they intended to attend to every letter and cater for all enquiries. In Melbourne four classes had been commenced, and more were wanted, but they were at their wits' end to find tutors. The tutorial movement of Australia had so far shown that the universities were not catering sufficiently for the study of economics and industrial history, and therefore they hoped to reinforce them in this direction. He wished to make it clear that it was not the wish of the university professors to conserve their knowledge. They were anxious to impart their learning to any willing student. That was what a teacher lived for. It was the breath of life to a teacher.

The movement had come to Australia, and already it seemed probable that, in addition to the classes, a large correspondence system would result, so that men on the sheep runs could benefit by the scheme. It would be the instrument of economic progress. Australia ought to take up the movement with both hands and to advance by its aid to that point where it could face with confidence any description of political or economic crisis which would assuredly come.

Advertiser 14/5/14

Professor Meredith Atkinson has consented to meet intending students of the University tutorial classes at the Trades Hall at 8 o'clock to-night. Those desirous of taking advantage of the facilities provided by the formation of these classes are requested to attend and indicate the subject in which they desire tuition.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION MEETING.

Subscription lists for membership of the British Association for the Australian meeting, 1914, are now open. People may join either as full members for the whole Australian meeting at a fee of £2, in which case they have the right to attend meetings at all centres; as members for Adelaide only at a fee of £1; or as associates at a fee of £1 for more than one, or 10/ for one centre only. Associates have all privileges of membership, except that they do not receive the published report of the proceedings of the meeting, and do not have a vote in the election of officers. Subscriptions should be forwarded to the assistant Treasurer (Mr. F. W. Eardley), the University, North terrace.

GRADUATES IN FORESTRY.

When Mr. H. H. Corbin, B.Sc., came from Edinburgh to join the Forest Department of this State as instructor in forestry it was found desirable to establish a School of Forestry, attached to the University, in order that young men might be trained in the science of forestry with a view of fitting them to take up the work of tree culture so urgently needed in a country like ours. Equipped with this knowledge there is an opening for those who have an inclination for out-of-door employment, who, taking up land, would naturally devote a portion of it to tree-shelter belts and plantations and thus demonstrate to neighbors the advantages of trees on a farm, not only for protection from high sweeping winds and shelter for stock, but also for fire-wood and fences. Accordingly a prospectus was prepared providing for training in the science and practice of forestry, in which there is a wide and interesting field, and many important problems awaiting solution by experiment and research. This work can best be undertaken by men who have received a good training in the principles and practice of forestry. The training provided at the School of Forestry consists of University instruction and practice in forestry at the State Forests. There are 12 bursaries available at the University, exempting students from fees and leading to the science degree in forestry. Students who graduate B.Sc. in forestry will be qualified for appointment in the Woods and Forests Department. The first student to obtain the diploma is Mr. R. G. McKail, of the Mount Burr Forest. He was admitted to the degree of bachelor of science in forestry of the University of Adelaide yesterday. This is of special interest, as Mr. McKail is the first student admitted to the degree of forestry in Australasia. Mr. McKail has displayed commendable zeal during the three years' study, and has applied himself to arduous work both in the University and on the forest reserves with energy and marked ability, and as a result he now possesses the hallmark of the degree in forestry. He is to be congratulated on his success. There is great need for men with similar qualifications throughout Australia, as too much cannot be known about the subject by those who have to handle woodlands and forests of great economic value. It is well known that young men with a thorough knowledge of the principles of sciences relating to forests and tree culture generally must, with mature experience, be an asset of great value to the Commonwealth.

WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

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