

TEACHERS FLAY UNIVERSITY

"Exclusiveness, Not Wide Culture" AGAINST CUT

It is not difficult to believe that the majority report of the committee which enquired into education represents the desires of the Taxpayers' Association and the University of Adelaide," says a statement issued today by the South Australian Public Teachers' Union.

The statement deprecates that Prof. J. McKellar Stewart and Mr. Wallace Sandford should have favored a cut in education expenditure.

Speaking of the University, it says:—"The University is an institution which seems of recent years to have modified its policy of extending the realms of culture as widely as possible, in favor of a policy of exclusiveness, and of giving preference to a few exceptionally brilliant honors students."

VAST DEPARTMENT

"However earnest and sincere men such as Prof. Stewart and Mr. Sandford are, and however great their mental calibre, can it be reasonably expected that they can overhaul such a vast department as the Education Department, with its many services?" asks the statement.

The statement takes the Taxpayers' Association to task for having attacked high schools and central schools, and says the idea that most children who attend are unable to cope with the course is false.

"It is reported that the committee recommends that the number of students entering high schools should be restricted by at least 50 per cent," says the statement. "This, combined with a proposed change of nine guineas, would probably close most of our country high schools and reduce the survivors to the status of higher primary schools."

Figures are given comparing the cost of education of high school students and those who attend the university. The statement says that if high school scholars are made to pay a fee of nine guineas they will be contributing one-half of the cost of their education, while university students pay fees which represent about a quarter of the cost of the institution.

News 31-7-31

Sir Joseph Cooke Verco, one of the ablest physicians South Australia has had, will be 80 years of age tomorrow. He was born at Fullarton, and was educated at the Adelaide Education Academy and St. Peter's College. At the academy he was a classmate of Mr. C. C. Kingston, formerly Premier of South Australia. In 1870 Sir Joseph went to the University of London to study medicine, and returned a physician in 1878. He was knighted in 1919, and gave up the practice of medicine one year later. He has one of the best collections of South Australian shells in the State, and is regarded as an authority on them.

Adv. 31-7-31

Lunch Hour Organ Recital

Mr. John Horner, in his organ recital at the Elder Conservatorium yesterday ranged from Bach to Debussy. The former's E minor prelude and fugue received a great rendering, and in lighter vein, the latter's "Little Shepherd" and ballet music proved of fascinating interest. Schumann's ever-welcome "Traumerel" was played with the art that conceals art.

Dr. Cyril Roothma, organist for the past 30 years at St. John's College Cambridge, was drawn upon for "Epinion," which is, being interpreted, "Song of Victory." Impressive in its beginning and ending, the middle movement of the aridly academic sort, was all the better for the judicious abbreviation accorded it by the player. Rheinberger's toccata in C, from his 14th sonata, made a delightful finish to a brilliant recital.

Mr. Jack Prider sang Sir Hubert Parry's virile setting of William Blake's "Jerusalem" in good style to the recitalist's organ accompaniment.

On August 6, Mr. Horner's next programme will include Cesar Franck's third choral in E minor and two miniature tone poems from Nesbitt's "Hebrid Seas."

Adv. 31-7-31

Dr. F. H. Beare, who in Executive Council yesterday was appointed honorary assistant physician at the Adelaide Hospital, is at present in London, where recently he was admitted as a member of the Royal College of Physicians. Dr. Beare is a native of South Australia, and will reside in Adelaide shortly.

Dr. W. Christie was yesterday appointed principal medical officer in the Education Department in succession to Dr. Gertrude Halley, who resigned recently. Dr. Christie was born at Dunfermline, Scotland, in 1889, and came to South Australia in 1911. He enlisted in the A.I.F. in 1915, and was attached to the 8th and 15th Field Ambulances. He served as a staff sergeant in Egypt, France, and Belgium, and was discharged in 1919. He was a chemist before the war, but took his medical course at the Adelaide University on his return, and graduated M.B., B.S., in 1925, and was appointed medical inspector of schools in 1926. He is a vice-president of the Lothian Club, a fellow of the South Australian branch of the Royal Society, member of the British Medical Association, a member of the Anthropological and Field Naturalist Societies, and a member of the Institute of Public Administration.

Adv. 31-7-31

GEOGRAPHY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Dr. Charles Fenner, who is lecturer in geography at the Adelaide University, and has written several works on the history of South Australia and on scientific subjects, has published a book entitled, "South Australia: A Geographical Study." Written in narrative form, and freely illustrated with maps, graphs, and photographs, the book places facts concerning the State in a new form, showing some relationships not previously considered. It is actually a scientific study, the result of 15 years' research of soils, rainfall, temperature, people, and products of South Australia.

Adv. 31-7-31

Miss G. V. Gaetjens, the present Catherine Helen Spence scholar, who will leave for London on Wednesday, has been granted a commission to enquire into and report upon vocational psychology and post-educational facilities in Great Britain. In connection with the scholarship, Miss Gaetjens will investigate the treatment of social problems in overseas countries, and study vocational psychology as applied to the education of young women, with special reference to the right use of leisure. She will be abroad for two years.

Adv. 4-8-31

At a meeting of the council of the School of Mines on Monday, the president, Sir Langdon Bonython, said:—"I cannot allow the opportunity to pass without saying how pleased the members of this council are to know that two of their number, Professor Chapman and Professor Kerr Grant—outstanding personalities in the University life of Australia—are leaving this week to attend the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to be held in London next month, and also to be present at the centennial celebrations connected with the discoveries in electricity made by that marvellous genius, Michael Faraday. In public estimation he is a greater man now than when he died. He indicated lines of development which have been followed up by others, with the result that the far-reaching character of his work is astounding. He has modified not only our mode of life, but also our ways of thinking," says Sir William Bragg, who is director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, with which Faraday was associated for fifty-four years. Sir William's fine tribute, contained in a broadcast address, and endorsed by the whole scientific world, has increased value from the fact that the lecturer himself is one of the foremost scientists of the day. There is satisfaction in knowing that Sir William Bragg was for years a member of this council, and that the chair of physics at the Adelaide University, which he vacated, is now filled by Professor Kerr Grant."

TEACHERS' CASE FOR FREE HIGH SCHOOLS

S.A.P.T.U. Views Set Out

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There is no doubt in the minds of members of the South Australian Public Teachers' Union that a section of the press has shown for several years an unsympathetic attitude towards the Education Department and does not reflect public opinion. We think that there is abundant evidence in the way of school committees, parents' associations, &c., to show the tremendous interest and pride shown by our people in their schools. Nor do we feel that associations such as the Taxpayers' Association, of which Mr. Wallace Sandford was president when it attacked the high schools in the press in September, 1929, are in any way representative of the views of the general public. We can quite understand that, while the Minister of Education yielded to the representations of the press and of the Taxpayers' Association in appointing a Commission, the Minister would be the last person in the world to feel bound to accept its recommendations without the closest scrutiny. It would not be difficult to believe that the majority report represents the desires of two rather exclusive bodies, the Taxpayers' Association, of which, as we have said, Mr. Wallace Sandford was recently chairman, and the University, represented by Professor McKellar Stewart, an institution which seems of recent years to have modified its policy of extending the realms of culture as widely as possible in favor of a policy of exclusiveness and of giving preference to a few exceptionally brilliant honors students. Parliament, too, has its responsibility in such matters. Before Parliament tamps with an educational system which has been carefully and slowly evolved out of the very lives of such men as J. A. Hartley, Alfred Williams, W. T. McCoy, members will ask themselves questions such as these—

(a) However earnest and sincere men such as Mr. Sandford and Professor McKellar Stewart are, and however great their mental calibre, can it be reasonably expected that in a few months (while still pursuing their ordinary vocations) they can overhaul such a vast department as the Education Department, with its many services? How many schools have they visited? Do they know what is being done elsewhere in Australia, or in other parts of the world? Have they visited schools in other States? Have they called any evidence?

(b) Has the press shown an impartial attitude in its attack on education? When it speaks of the high cost of education, has it ever given the comparative costs of other States? When it indicates that in other States fees are charged in high schools, does it mean to imply that all other States charge fees, or that Victoria is the only State that does so? Has it ever pointed out that the Minister of Education has directed the most searching enquiries into every branch of the department, and that economies have been effected wherever possible without interfering with the opportunities of the children. We feel quite sure that the statement of the Minister in showing how savings had been effected would leave the general public far more satisfied than would the wholesale chopping off of branches which the amateur pruner would consider effective.

As the attack of the press and the Taxpayers' Association seems to be directed particularly on the high schools, we should like to make a few statements on their behalf.

(1) The Education Department provides both high schools and central schools in the metropolitan area; before a child leaves grade VII. of the primary school he receives a letter from the Education Department pointing out the differences in the course of study of the various types of schools; it seems to us to be more in accord with our democratic principles to allow the child some freedom of choice as to the school he should attend rather than assume that only a small percentage of children are worthy of higher education.

(2) It is reported that the Commission recommends that means should be introduced to restrict the number of students entering high schools by at least 50 per cent. of the present numbers. Apart from the consideration of their means of making this calculation, the acceptance of these figures, combined with the charge of nine guineas will probably have the effect of closing most of our country high schools, and reducing the survivors to the status of a high primary school.

(3) A fee of nine guineas, as suggested in this report, will prevent many children from attending high schools, and throw thousands

dren into the street; the moral effect of such an action on these children has not been alluded to in the leaders and sub-leaders of our press, which further neglects to mention that parents now have quite heavy burdens in the matter of books, fares, sports fees, &c.

(4) The allowance of liberal exemptions seems to introduce an undemocratic principle of class distinction. Though there may be a few parents who could afford to pay the fees suggested, all teachers know that the number is very much smaller than is suggested in the press, and represents a very small percentage.

(5) The amount saved would be no recompense for wrecking the system. The latest Minister's report shows that 5,651 children were in attendance at high schools on August 1930. Of these, 30.9 per cent. were under the age of 14, leaving 69.1 per cent. above the compulsory age. If only 50 per cent. of the present numbers are to be allowed to attend a high school, 1,950 may be looked to for fees. In Victoria, however, where a fee of £6 is charged per annum, it is found that so many exemptions have to be granted that an average of £3 14/4 is collected from each child. Even assuming that all those who could manage the £6 could afford the nine guineas, and, assuming a similar ratio here in South Australia as in Victoria, the 1,950 children would bring in a revenue of £11,400. With the drastic proposals for closing country high schools, the amount collected would probably not amount to much more than £6,000 per annum.

(6) If a fee of nine guineas is charged it seems to us that the Government is assuming far greater responsibilities towards the parents than at present. The Minister pointed out recently that the high schools had, in the last two years, paid for practically all equipment used in these schools. If a fee were imposed the Government would be bound to supply all the requisite apparatus, &c. School councils and parents have realised the efforts toward economy that the Government is making, and have not embarrassed the Government by undue complaints. It is doubtful whether a similar spirit will exist if fees are charged.

(7) The high school education received by so many children indicates a general advancement in the intellectual and cultured life of a large section of our people; but we realise that a University education is restricted to comparatively few. The high school child is asked, however, to pay for a half of his education costs (nine guineas out of a cost of £19 11/9, while the University student pays in fees for only about a quarter of the total cost of the university (fees amount to £28,740 out of a total expenditure of £102,534).

(8) The reason for the differentiation between the fees to be charged in different types of schools seems incompatible with all principles of democracy, and strangely at variance even with any guiding principles of economy. Great numbers of our students leave high schools to enter commercial and industrial pursuits, to go on the land, or to follow many other callings. Why one boy, who desires to become a carpenter (say) should pay 4½ guineas per annum to attend a central school, and another, who wishes to go on the land or to become a chemist or a teacher, should pay double that amount, seems to us to be raising class distinctions that are most undesirable. It has not been shown that the cost per child in attendance at the central school is less than the cost per child in attendance at a metropolitan high school.

(9) It will be interesting to learn the reasons for suggesting the removal of the commercial side of our high schools to the central schools. What will happen in our country high schools?

(10) The wrecking of the high school system would be the most serious blow at democracy that has been attempted in the last decade. Our boast, as a democratic people, has been that we aim at providing equal opportunities for all children, irrespective of their class, or the financial or social position of their parents. (We all admit that children are not equally endowed in regard to their mental ability, manual dexterity, &c.) Whereas, even twenty-five years ago, admission to the University, to the banks, or to the bigger commercial houses, &c., was practically denied to the children of those who could not afford an expensive college education, we know that our children now have opportunity to be more than hewers of wood and drawers of water. The establishment of the high schools has been a most important factor in the last thirty years in breaking down class distinctions.