

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION.

ENQUIRY CONTINUED.

A meeting of the Education Commission was held at Parliament House on Monday, the chairman (Mr. T. Ryan) presiding. There were present the Hon. A. H. Peake, the Hon. A. W. Styles, and Mr. T. Green, M.P.

Mr. Edwin Jordan, B.Sc., Sydney, M.A., Leland Stanford, U.S.A., inspector of schools, said his work as far as possible was in the secondary schools, and it was evident that those institutions would soon take up all his attention. Stanford University was practically a free institution, and a child could pass from the kindergarten through the university without cost. The only fees there were about £5 5/ for maintenance purposes in connection with the laboratory and an extra £10 10/ would cover the cost of books and entrance fees. So far as the course was concerned he thought that of Stanford was superior to that of the Sydney University, because it covered four years at the American institution compared with three years in Sydney. Entrance examinations had to be passed unless the applicants came from certain high schools, the examinations of which were recognised by the university as qualifying for entrance. The means afforded boys and girls in California to enter the university were much greater than they were in Australia, and they were largely availed of. The high schools were free, and if a child passed the examinations of the top class he was passed on to the university, but if subsequent examinations proved that incapable students were sent on, the whole of the children at the school concerned were penalised, because the school was struck off the university list as a school whose examination results were regarded as equal to the entrance examinations of the university. So far as salaries were concerned only the masters of the top schools in South Australia were adequately paid, but the same sort of thing existed in other parts of the world. There was not the slightest doubt that the poorer children of America had better facilities for acquiring a good education than the children of South Australia, because in America education was recognised as the backbone of the nation's progress, and special inducements were held out to clever children to pursue their studies at universities. Even in the high schools in that country books were supplied to the children who could not afford to pay for them, but the identity of the recipients was not made known. He thought the Government would be fully warranted in spending much more on education than they were spending at present in order to increase the facilities, but he would insist on the proper training of teachers.

In answer to Mr. Green, who asked whether the witness thought improvements in the system could be introduced, he said the district high schools were an excellent beginning, and they were being increased in number as fast as money was made available. It would be an advantage if the secondary school system was made a special branch, which would give it a better status.

In reply to Mr. Styles, Mr. Jordan said schools in America were allowed a certain sum by the State Governments, and if they required more the local school boards had to raise it from the people in the towns in which the schools were located. He was not entirely satisfied with his present position, because he thought his work would be confined entirely to the high schools. He was the lowest on the salary list of the inspectors, and had to inspect the highest schools, and men were in charge of secondary schools who received a higher salary than he did, so that he "entered their schools with a certain amount of care." A great deal was done in the way of evening schools in California, and the thing that was lacking in the local high schools was that no diploma was given. South Australia was building on sound lines, and he thought the future of the high schools would have an important influence on higher education.

Mr. Peake then examined the witness, who said it was in connection with the high school work particularly that he was first approached, and he believed his chief work would be associated with the high schools. His salary was £300, and he had full rank as an inspector, but the whole of his time was not occupied in inspectorial work. The salary of the headmaster of the Adelaide High School (£450) compared favorably with the salary of a headmaster of a similar school in America, but the average of the high schools in America was about £280 and in South Australia it

was between £150 and £200. In connection with the primary system and the men in charge, the salaries in America and South Australia were about the same, and £350 here was equal to £400 in America on account of the difference in the cost of living. The cost of living must be taken into account in connection with all salaries. The great advantage of the American system over that of South Australia, in regard to opportunities given to the children of poor people was that a four years' course was given in the high schools, whereas here it was two years. He regarded the senior or matriculation examination as an excellent standard, and thought the network of examinations, for which students often crammed themselves, resulted in their loss of the full value of the education they gained, which enabled them to pass the matriculation. Separate examinations were made for entry into the Federal and State civil services and the railway service, and it would be an advantage if one standard were agreed upon to entitle young people to entry into those services. He thought that secondary education was more important than the extension of the capacity of the University. The extension of the University would follow the encouragement of secondary education, which would stimulate the advanced institution. Without secondary education the University would be a cultural institution, and not a utilitarian one. It would be wise to open the whole of the bursary examinations to all the schools; it would stimulate competition. He did not think State intermediate schools would interfere with such colleges as Prince Alfred and St. Peter's; rather they would increase the attendance at such places. When high schools were started there had been an outcry against them, but they had had a beneficial effect upon the colleges. The more widely diffused education was, the more likelihood of a nation being led by wise men. There was an historic example in the victory of Germany over France in 1871, as it was Germany's learned men who had gained that victory. It would be advantageous if some specialist were engaged to take charge of technical education in the same way as the Director of Education controlled the primary State schools. In reply to a question by the chairman, whether the certificate of the School of Mines would be as valuable as the University degree, he said the University brand was always better than a degree of any other institution. It would be better if the School of Mines was controlled by the Education Department, and the highest grade of education by the University. If something were done to make University degrees more valuable to a graduate it would encourage students. Now no notice was taken of a degree in the public service, and young fellows who had taken their degree found that their time had been wasted, as promotion was purely by seniority.

Mr. Peake drew attention to the remarkable disparity in the figures of expenditure on education in this State and in other States, and wondered whether the expenditure in other States included cost of buildings. He knew the school staff was paid as highly here as in any of the States, and could not understand the comparatively small expenditure here.

EDUCATION COMMISSION.

INSPECTOR JORDAN'S EVIDENCE.

The second session of the Education Commission was held at Parliament House on Monday. Present—Mr. Ryan, M.P. (Chairman), the Hon. A. W. Styles, M.L.C., the Hon. A. H. Peake, M.P., and Mr. Green, M.P.

Edwin Jordan, B.Sc. (Sydney), M.A. (Stanford, U.S.A.), Inspector of Schools, said his main work was in the State secondary schools. Stanford University was practically free, and a student could pass from the kindergarten right through the university. The only fees there were about £5 5/ for maintenance purposes in connection with the laboratory, and £10 10/ would cover entrance fees and books. He thought the course at Stanford was superior to the Sydney University, because its course was four years against three for Sydney. The means in California available for a pupil to go from the State high schools to the University were better than in Australia. Public opinion was such a big factor that the boy went into the university from the primary high schools without an entrance examination. The high schools were free. The high school that sent up people to the university who were no good would be struck off the university list; then scholars for those years would have to pass an entrance examination. The organization of the free universities of America were superior to those in Australia in that a student continued his studies along a special line, having previously determined what he wanted to aim at. The average salaries for secondary school teachers in the United States would be £284 for males and £205 for females, and a head teacher would get £400. In Australia the pay would range from £88 to £240. Only the top positions in the Australian schools were adequately paid. The man in charge of the primary school had not generally the conception of secondary education to be the superior officer of the master of the high school. The South Australian school buildings were very good ones compared with those in other places. The American idea of education was that education was the national backbone of success; it was not education for the young, but for the United States of America. Australia could not spend too much on education, and would be justified in asking the taxpayer for a much larger contribution for the purpose. The Adelaide High School was equal to St. Peter's College, except in respect to the athletic and social life, which was not yet possible at the former school. A residential college was a great educational factor. Education was not a matter of books more than one of rubbing up against people. The American university men regarded the vacation as an opportunity for work, and two-thirds of them obtained jobs for the long holiday, in order to work their passage through college to the greater possibilities that lay beyond. As such they were the more respected by their fellows.

—South Australian High Schools.—

By Mr. Green—A good beginning had been made in the improvement of the State system of education by the establishment of the high schools, and these were being increased as the money became available. He felt that if the high school system was made a separate branch of the department it would have a better status than as an appendage to the primary system. It would be a good thing if the secondary portion had a certain proportion of the money for itself. In Massachusetts a deal was done in the way of evening high schools for those who worked during the day. The lack in the South Australian high schools was that no diplomas were given; otherwise the schools were on sound lines. The following were the numbers of pupils at the respective State high schools:—Adelaide, 511; Norwood, 269; Unley, 161; Lefevre's Peninsula, 152; Hindmarsh, 120; Mount Gambier, 73; Moonta, 63; Gawler, 60; Mount Barker, 58; Narracoorte, 57; Wallaroo Mines, 53; Port Pirie, 52; Victor Harbour, 43; Petersburg, 42; Kapunda, 42; Jamestown, 32; Gladstone, 31; Blumberg, 25; Quorn, 23; total, 1,867. There were also a few pupils in continuation classes at the primary schools. In America the average attendance at the high schools would be about 500. Allowing for the difference in numbers attending the South Australian district high schools, as compared with those in the United States, the local teachers were hardly paid enough. They ought to get £200 a year. South Australia did not suffer in comparison with America in the salary of its primary school teachers in charge. A salary of £350 in Adelaide would be equal to £400 in America. A suit of clothes which