

Advertiser, Nov. 11th, 1909

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY.

Adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. Ryan—"That it is desirable that increased facilities be given to deserving students to continue their studies at the University of Adelaide."

The TREASURER complimented Mr. Ryan on the speech he made when moving the motion, a speech which gave evidence of careful research and preparation. The motion was somewhat general, inasmuch as it merely sought to affirm that an increased amount should be spent in order to give access to the University to those who had hitherto been unable to reach its doors. He would have been more pleased if the hon. member had more fully recognised what has been recently done by means of the bursaries which the State had granted to those attending the public schools, and had expressed his desire to see that system extended rather than have advocated a proposal which appeared almost impossible of realisation. The Government was fully alive to the importance of the question of education in all its phases. It recognised that greater knowledge and greater skill, joined to untiring industry, when brought to bear upon the natural resources of a country, spell advancement for the State, more widespread comfort and greater happiness for the people. There could be no dispute upon this point that increase of knowledge, skill, and industry on the part of all sections of the community was an object greatly to be desired, and it was the wish and the intention of the Government to so organise and co-ordinate the educational agencies of the State that this object might, in some measure at least, be achieved. The Government did not lose sight of the fact that the trained intelligence of the people is an asset whose value cannot be overestimated. Without it, natural resources would lie undisturbed or would only be partially developed. Knowledge, power, skill—these were the golden keys which unlocked to man Nature's storehouse of wealth—which enabled man to gain possession of the wealth she guards so zealously. In improving and extending the educational facilities of the State the Government was faced with a task which was complicated and expensive. The conditions of our settlement made it so. It was not easy to provide for the education of children, scattered as they were over our great area. For the children of the settlers on the frontier lines of our advancing settlement we must provide at least a liberal elementary education. Men and women who undertook the hardships and disabilities associated with such pioneer work were entitled to every consideration, and should have as good teachers as the State could provide. The cost of education of the children of the back blocks was five or six times as great as it was in the places of closer settlement. The system of primary schools must be improved. To bring about the desired improvement important developments would shortly take place in the method of training the teachers. Everybody recognised the value of the work done by the University in this respect, but the system in vogue during the past nine years had been only a portion of the scheme originally planned, and had not provided a completely ideal method of training teachers for work in primary schools. The changes contemplated involved additions to the Training College staff, and this would, of course, mean additional expenditure. In future there would be special training for infant teachers, primary teachers and secondary teachers, of whom the last-named would find employment in the high schools. When this system, which would be inaugurated in January next, came into full operation, we would have a system of training which would compare favorably with that in operation in the other States of the Commonwealth, and which would ultimately result in superior educational work in every school throughout the State. Another important phase of educational advancement upon which the Government was at present engaged was the extension

of the opportunities for higher education in the city and suburbs, and throughout the State. The Adelaide High School, in its furniture and equipment, was second to no school of its kind in Australia, and it was worthy of note that it was the first free high school in Australia. The boys and girls educated there would no doubt give a good account of themselves by-and-by. The country had not been forgotten. District high schools, in which very good work had been done had been established in eleven centres. To make the system of State secondary education complete it remained to extend the operations of the high schools to the suburbs of Adelaide, and that was a task which would be undertaken immediately and extended as rapidly as the supply of teachers would permit. In pleading for a special money grant for the University, Mr. Ryan asked that the Government should provide the University with a sum of money to cover the cost of board and lodgings, as well as the fees of country boys and girls who might enter upon a course of university studies. Mr. Ryan might be interested to learn that this principle had already been adopted in connection with the high school and district high school. No fees were collected at these schools, and in June of this year a scheme of maintenance scholarships was devised, which would come into operation next year. These scholarships would enable parents whose homes were in remote districts to send their more deserving sons and daughters to district high schools or the Adelaide High School. The chief reason the extension of the high schools system could not be carried out now was that there were not enough teachers available. There were several parts of the State which had made strong representations to the Government in regard to the establishment of high schools, but the great obstacle to compliance with their wishes was the lack of teachers. There were 54 scholarships, involving an annual expenditure of £3,200. Eight (8) of these scholarships (value £22 per annum) were tenable at any approved secondary school, other than those under Government control. To encourage the students in secondary schools to pursue their work with zeal and industry, the Government had recently provided ten bursaries of the annual value of £25, tenable for four years, at the University. This involved an expenditure of £1,000 per annum. In proceeding upon the lines outlined, the Government believed that it was building wisely, laying sound foundations, and preparing for a fine superstructure. Any satisfactory system of education must provide for efficient infant schools, primary schools, secondary schools, and university and technical schools. Mr. Ryan asked the Government to complete the fourth story of their edifice before they had fairly begun the third. At present the Government felt that the best way to help the university was to amplify and extend its secondary schools, to provide students with the ground work necessary to undertake studies of a university character. A university was the highest seat of learning in the land, the home of advanced learning of culture and research. Only those students who had been well prepared and trained to enter upon such work could do credit either to themselves or the university, and it would be waste of money to allow any other students to enter upon a course of university work. A university was not a glorified technical school. It should no doubt be interested in the industries of the State, and seek to send out men trained to develop those industries, but while its aims and ideals might be somewhat modified to meet the varying needs of changing conditions, its standards must always be high, and the present effort of the Government was directed to preparing such students as would be able to undertake the work of advanced character done at the University. In the South Australian system of education in the past they had concentrated most attention on the primary schools, but in response to a strong wave of opinion they were now devoting more attention to secondary schools. These had been established in 11 centres, and there were several other places which must soon be granted similar advantages before the secondary system had reached its limit. This had necessarily imposed extra burdens on the people, but it had given many advantages to parents living in the country. They had been enabled to give a superior education to their children, and more children had been benefited than if the same amount of money had been spent in giving students facilities for attending the University of Adelaide. Nor did he see any chance of increasing the University grant until the secondary schools were at work for some time. They are the feeders of the University, and at least four years' attendance were necessary at such school before a pupil was fit for the higher studies at the University. Mr. Ryan had lauded the free universities of the United States, and many of them had wondered how such a huge cost was financed. They must bear in mind that every country worked out its educational salvation in its own way. Competent observers again and again had told them that in the United States there was nothing equal to the rural schools of Australia. Why was this? Because, in that great country they had from the beginning started on a different system. There it was a question of local rating to supply the cost of primary education; here the central authority shouldered the whole cost, and taught to the same standard up to the fourth or fifth class. In the States the small schools were open for a limited number of weeks in each year; here the smallest schools were open for the same period as the schools in larger towns. For this advantage they had to pay, and surely Mr. Ryan believed that every child should first have the opportunity of getting the rudiments of education. Mr. Board, the Director of Education in New South Wales, had recently issued a valuable report, giving his impressions of a three months' tour during March, April, and May, of this year, in the United States and Canada.

From this concise report he had been able to gather much concerning the subject of Mr. Ryan's motion. Mr. Board highly eulogised the great State University of Wisconsin, which taught and investigated all the practical problems of the State—agricultural, industrial, political, social, and moral. Like at other American Universities, the attendance was free. How, then, did the university derive an income? The State of Wisconsin paid over to it annually one-seventh of its total revenues. Think of the Treasurer of this State paying to the University of Adelaide half a million sovereigns (£500,000) per annum. How much would they be able to afford for primary and secondary education, which in the States were paid for from district rates? That, then, was the answer to the free American University. They apportioned the State revenues differently to America. The central Government left primary education alone. They paid the total cost of primary education. Members would see that technical education, the Agricultural College, and the Schools of Mines, were devoted to work that most of the American universities undertook. They found their system best for them; and there was little doubt that the South Australian system was better for the State. To a certain extent South Australia decentralised in higher education and centralised in primary education; and the United States had done the opposite in both forms of education. The Americans had shown the highest development of the modern university. Sixty years ago James Russell Lowell spoke of the universities as places where young men spent a good many years in learning nothing that was useful. The passing of examinations was not always followed by brilliant success in the world of men. Sir Henry Parkes had no such facilities, and he wrote his name deeply on the history of his State. The Right Hon. Sir G. H. Reid was not distinguished as a law student at a university, because he never attended one, but to-day at the bar or on the floor of the House he did not show the lack of an academic training. Mr. Deakin, the most brilliant orator that Australia has produced, was not a graduate of any university. The most sanguine would scarcely expect the university-trained lawyer of the future to surpass in skill the records of Sir Samuel Way, Sir Josiah Symon, and other able pleaders at the South Australian bar, who have had to succeed without university qualifications. Perhaps too often the academic successes won by a young man had been the occasion of a stoppage of further displays of energy. Like the man who rose too early, he had been energetic during the morning of his life, drowsy during the afternoon, and asleep near the end of the day. That was often the case with university students, who were pushed too much during their time of study. Mr. Board well said:—"The highest education is not that which enables the student to enjoy his books in the armchair of his leisure hours, but rather that which enables him to render service by doing something that other people want done." They had realised that in establishing the Agricultural College and the Schools of Mines, where students were trained in the scientific methods of the primary producer. The training in other professions, such as medicine and law, which the University undertook, was of the greatest value to the community, but no one, so far as he was aware, ever complained that there was a dearth of lawyers or of physicians. The present facilities seemed to be ample for keeping up the supply of both important professions. The effort of the Government for some years to come would be directed towards:—1. Improving the primary system.

- 2. Establishing a secondary system on sound lines. 3. Organising the work of country technical schools. 4. Establishing evening continuation schools—a varied and full programme. Mr. Ryan had jumped at something many years ahead. He had conceived a wrong idea of the lines on which education should proceed. They must to a large extent accommodate their desires and inclinations to the means at their disposal. Anything could be done if the people were willing to pay the price, but they would not jump ahead in the manner proposed. The proper course was slowly to improve, increase, and strengthen the primary and secondary systems, to increase and enlarge the scope of the technical schools, and finally to put on the coping stone by providing facilities for a university education.