

Register, June 10/11

UNIVERSITY COMMISSION.

PROFESSOR HENDERSON EXAMINED.

The University Education Commission met at Parliament House on Friday, and examined Professor G. C. Henderson, of the Adelaide University. There were present—Mr. Ryan, M.P. (Chairman), the Hon. A. W. Styles and J. Cowan, M.L.C., Hon. A. H. Peake, M.P., and Mr. Green, M.P.

—Against Free University Education.—

Professor Henderson said there were usually two ways suggested for extending the University to make it more practically effective to the State. One was by means of free education at the University, and the other by the extension of the present scholarship system. He favoured, as the better way, the use of the scholarship system as liberally as possible. He said that because he had been a poor boy himself and had to struggle for his university education. Had the university system been free he could not have gone to it, because his parents could not have afforded to keep him there; but the scholarship system got over that difficulty. Poor people who had children who showed desire for knowledge usually had a great struggle till the eldest child was 14 years old. Then pressure of circumstances obliged them to send the child to work. A free system at the University would not meet that difficulty, and might even defeat the ends which it was intended to serve. It might look at first sight as if it would help poor children, but it would really help the rich more than the poor. The rich man had no strain to send his children to work early, and could afford to pay for their maintenance at the University. Therefore free education would but relieve him of the burden of fees. He did not think sufficient facilities were offered to enable the poor to get to the University. The scholarship system might be extended widely. The most satisfactory students at the University were those who had come from the primary schools, through the secondary schools. They wanted as many of those as they could get, because they were precisely the men who would do the University credit, and there was a large field for the selection. If the scholarship system were extended, more assistants would be required. In every extension of the benefits of the University to country students, care was needed that the value of the degrees was not lowered, for the University standard must be kept in its present high position, and no injustice must be done to past graduates. It was far better that rather than students should read by themselves in the country they should hear the professors explain the work at the University. They would there obtain a knowledge of method, meet and argue with each other in the associated societies. There was also the athletic part of the University life, which not merely strengthened the muscles, but taught the students to work together for common ends. The man in the country who prepared for examination through books might get a degree; but it was what they called a "thin" one, for the question of leadership had not come into the life.

—The Wider Council.—

By Mr. Peake—The University was something greater than a college, in so far as it had the power to confer degrees and helped on the side of intellectual attainment to something higher than college life would help. It was at present most largely availed of by people specializing for professional careers. He would not favour lowering the entrance examination to widen the doors. That would give facilities for moneyed people coming in rather than men of brains. People required a certain standard of education before they could get much good out of a university, else the professors would talk over their heads. Some students on the art side came there for the love of education, and those were likely to be the best students. He liked to see them if only for a year, and they were a stimulating influence in the classes. There might be half a dozen at the heels of the scholarship winner, but the cases of those could be covered by the extension of scholarships. He was not in favour of doing away with fees altogether, because some people could afford to pay. What they wanted in the University was not so much the student with money at his back to enable him to be there, but the man with brains to enable him to make the best of his university career. He regarded it as highly important that the principal assembly in the State for administrative purposes should be represented on the University Council. He believed the people had not known what the University was doing, and misconceptions

would be largely removed if they had members of Parliament on the council. Moreover, the University ought to have men in Parliament who could put forward its views. The question of handing control of the University to the State was a big one. He did not know whether he was competent to speak on that. The fear in some of their minds would be that if it were entirely controlled by the State, the men who were not expert in knowledge of the different branches would not appreciate from time to time the necessity of keeping up the standards of University life. He was personally of opinion that the governing body should be controlled ultimately by two constituencies. The one should consist of all the graduates, because they had been through the system of training and understood the value of standards, and knew what education stood for. The other constituency should be the Parliament.

—Aid to the State.—

In regard to the resources of the State the Government departments should feel they could refer problems to the University, and expect an answer to them from the men of expert training. In all those departments of the State corresponding to departments in the University—such as agriculture, geology, and mineralogy—the head of the department should be able to refer problems to the University and ask for a report. It would not be necessary for him to act on the report—there might be many difficulties in the way of that; but there should be some close connection between the Government which administered the country and the University which helped to solve its problems.

—Historical Research.—

If they had a Chair of History they must provide work for their picked students that should be of advantage to the country. At Oxford and Cambridge men trained at the University were able to undertake historical research, by means of the original State documents in medieval Latin or the old Norman-French. Here that was impracticable, and the only research work that seemed possible was what appeared to him the best. They had in Adelaide original material, which would be the basis for a history of the Commonwealth. The best of it was at Government House, and consisted of despatches from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and vice versa. These were now available to himself, but not to his picked students. He wanted to get those documents transferred to the Public Library, or some such institution, and there kept under close supervision in such a way that people recommended as bona-fide students should have access to them, due regard being paid to the necessity for preserving inviolate political matters, which should not be disclosed. Research work was the best work the University did, for it developed faculties which were not developed to the same extent by other kinds of work. The students had to find and arrange their material, and then come to their own conclusions. For that reason he was anxious to get the school of history founded if possible.

—A Comprehensive Control.—

The Chairman asked the witness:—Can you see any objection to a University Council constituted of 25 members, as follows:—Three to be elected by the professorial staff; two (one a lady), by the undergraduates; five (one a lady) by the graduates; five to be elected by the whole State at the Federal elections; four by both Houses of Parliament (these to be members of Parliament); the President of the Trades and Labour Council to have a seat, also the Presidents of the Chamber of Manufactures and the Chamber of Commerce; that another member should be a paid Principal of the University, to be appointed by the Government; and that the whole of these should elect the other two members of the council?

Witness—If you don't mind me saying so, I don't like it, and mainly for the reason that when you get representatives from this and that body you bring men in each with a special obligation to a special institution. It would make the constitution of the council too political, and would lead to logrolling. A representative of the Chamber of Commerce, for instance, might fight hard for a Chair of Commerce, and forget the necessity of maintaining standards in other departments. There would be danger of too many fighting for their own interests, and too few seeking the interests of the whole.

Replying to questions by the Chairman on his proposed constitution of the council, Professor Henderson said he liked the idea of the professional staff and graduates represented, but he objected to the undergraduate representation, and thought also there should not be women on the council. The popular election of several members

would make the thing too complicated, and it would be better to leave the people's interest to be watched by the members of Parliament on the board. The election of a paid principal would be a splendid thing if they could get the right man, but whether Parliament should appoint him was another matter; personally he did not believe in a principal being so appointed. He preferred the control he had himself indicated, by the graduates and the Parliament.

—A Poor Boy's Triumph.—

By Mr. Green—It would cost a youth about £70 a year to go through the University; perhaps more in medicine. That sum was based on what had kept him personally while at Sydney University. He had had nothing to spare out of that, and did not think that students ought to have anything to spare when they got a scholarship from the State.

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ADDITIONAL AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES.

The Hon. W. Kingsmill, M.L.C., of Western Australia, who arrived in Adelaide on Thursday by the Melbourne express on his return journey from Queensland, where he represented his State at the inaugural celebrations in connection with the opening of the Brisbane University, is a native of South Australia. He was educated at St. Peter's College, and for a number of years was well known in this city, but when Western Australia first began to attract attention he threw in his lot with the "t'othersiders." He entered politics in Perth early in the history of responsible Government, and has remained there since. On several occasions he has held Cabinet rank. Speaking to a representative of The Register on Thursday, Mr. Kingsmill stated that Western Australia would have a university of its own before the end of the year. An annual grant of £13,500 had been guaranteed by the Government, and Sir Winthrop Hackett had endowed a chair of agriculture. An Act had been passed which provides that within a limited period a senate should be appointed, and so soon as this was done the university would come into existence. Mr. Kingsmill pointed out that Western Australia would start a university at a much earlier stage of her development than Queensland.

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Dr. Judah Leon Jona, who was admitted to the degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at the Melbourne University on Monday last, is an old Adelaide boy. He received his primary education in the public schools of this State, and in 1900 won a scholarship at Way College. He continued these with scholarships till May, 1903, when he was dux of the college. When Way College closed he went to Prince Alfred College and gained the Longbottom Scholarship in Mathematics. In 1904 he entered the University of Adelaide with the first Government scholarship, and took the medical and science courses. In 1905, he won the Elder Prize for the second year in medicine, and the following year he got his honours degree as Bachelor of Science. In 1907, he gained a scholarship at Trinity College, Melbourne, and at the examination of the third year medicine he won an exhibition in physiology. In 1909, in the middle of his fifth year medicine course, he gave up medicine to accept the University Scholarship in Physiology in the University of Melbourne. In 1910, he was appointed assistant lecturer in physiology in Melbourne, and at the end of the year received the degree of Doctor of Science in the Adelaide University. He has now been admitted to the degrees of M.B. and B.S. Melbourne. Dr. Jona was recently appointed a member of the Faculties of Science and Veterinary Science in the University of Melbourne.