

A BAD REFORMATORY

THINGS THAT DISGUSTED

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION

MR. RYAN MAKES A FEW COMPARISONS.

"May the Lord forbid that my audience should ever be put to the ordeal of examining State reformatories," said Mr. Thomas Ryan, at Hindmarsh yesterday. "When we did we found a great big building, large grounds, a staff of eight or nine men to look after 31 boys, to say nothing of the leg irons which would have been exhibited more in an old convict hulk than in an institution brought into existence to see if it were well with the child."

"First of all, we were told that the building was situated in the wrong place. I wonder if it occurred to those in charge that the real reason was that the work was entrusted to the wrong hands, and the conception of the reformatory was more in keeping with the spirit of the days of Marcus Clarke than our time? My statements in this connection have been frequently questioned, but let us look at the evidence from the principal officers. First the president. He said:—'If the boy were situated a little farther away from the city where they could do more pioneering work, I think we could do better with him.' And he went on to say:—'We have no education at Magill with the exception of a little night school work, owing to the boys being over the school age.'

"When the commission visited Magill we found that there was practically nothing being done there towards the further education of the boys, and we were very greatly surprised. There were 32 boys there, and six of them had passed the compulsory standard, 12 had been in the fourth class, four had been in the third class, and one in the second class. We also noticed that several of the boys were in legirons.

"On whose authority are those legirons put on the boys at the Magill Reformatory?" the president was asked. "I think it was on the recommendation of the superintendent, confirmed by the council, and approved by the Minister," he replied. "What is the longest period that the boys there are allowed to have those chains on?" "Between four and five weeks." "Those boys we saw had had them on for six weeks." "I was not aware of it."

"Then the secretary (Mr. Gray) bore eloquent testimony to the management by telling us officially:—'If the State will give me the money they are spending at Magill now, I will do the work better and have something over.'

"But perhaps the testimony of its superintendent will be more agreeable to the authorities than any statement of mine. Let me give it to you. We asked, 'What part of the day's work at Magill is set aside for the education of the boys at your institution?' and he replied, 'I may say none whatever. Sometimes there is a little night school, but that is by accident.' 'Even the backward boys who are over the school-going age are put into the ranks of the working boys at your institution?' 'Yes. My clerk, who is supposed to act as teacher, might, when he feels well enough, give those boys who are not too tired a few lessons in the evening. There is, however, nothing practical about it.' 'The only school you have up there is a Sunday school?' 'Yes, and very little of that. It all depends on whether the ministers or the teachers can spare the time.' 'Is there nobody who undertakes the religious instruction of the boys during Sunday afternoons?' 'I do it myself, and so does my wife. There is nobody outside. Of course, all the boys go to church on Sunday mornings.'

"But how different was the positions so far as the Salvation Army and Roman Catholic institutions were concerned. Alongside of where I speak to-day Father Healy, at Brooklyn Park, has a reformatory, two men looking after 25 boys, minus legirons. And Mr. Gray bore most eloquent testimony to the value of this reformatory by saying, 'I give him great credit for the way he manages the place. The boys who go from that institution to service very seldom return.' And he added 'I wish I could say that of the other.' I hope you will not think these gentlemen of the State Children's Council are unmindful of their public duty. I think they made this very plain to us by showing how they were able to resist the request from these private institutions who actually had the impudence to ask that they should get 7/6 per week for the care and upkeep of each instead of 6/6. Fancy actually wanting a rise of 1/ per week to board and guard these boys in these private institutions! No wonder the State Children's Council, as the guardians of public morals and public funds, resisted this to the utmost. They were not so successful as far as their own institution were concerned, for we find that it cost them not 6/6 per week but £1 17/6 per week to keep the boys at Magill, the figures being:—

- "Magill, £95 per year. But by the sale of produce by labor of those boys who ought to have been at school it was reduced to £79.
 - "Brooklyn Park, £20 10/ per year.
 - "Mount Barker Salvation Army Home for Boys, £22 6/ per year.
 - "Salvation Army Home for Girls, £23 8/ per year.
 - "Industrial School at Edwardstown, £37 4/ per year.
 - "Redruth, £53 12/ per year.
- "Is it any wonder that the commission recommendation reads:—'But we are convinced that the sooner the majority of the boys can be removed from the deadening influence of the Magill Reformatory the better?'"

SCHOOL INSPECTION

COMMISSIONER'S DENUNCIATION

SYSTEM SAID TO BE ACCURSED

CAN IT BE WELL WITH THE CHILD?

"We were disgusted and shocked to think that the time of our medical officer and her staff, instead of being devoted entirely to relieving the distress of our school children, had to be directed to other things. She told us in evidence that she was unable to get an office clerk to do the rudimentary and clerical work for her. This leads one strongly to think that one of the great needs in the education system to-day is undoubtedly the re-organisation of the Education Office," said Mr. T. Ryan in an address on the "Education Commission" yesterday. He continued:—"I am fully conscious of the enthusiasm, energy, and devotedness to duty, as well as the difficulties under which Mr. Maughan and his staff are laboring. They are doing their best, but too much is left to them. What a burlesque to say that we have a Chief Inspector of Schools—and an able and efficient officer, if not the most able and efficient officer of the present staff, Colonel Neale undoubtedly is—yet his whole time is taken up with office routine, and I question if he sees with the eyes of a chief inspector one school a year."

"Then for some reason or other there is an assistant chief inspector of schools who, I believe, since his appointment has been dotting i's and crossing t's—certainly tied to a desk in the Adelaide office instead of being out at his work among the schools. You will understand why I say that the curse of Cain does not rest more heavily on the human family than the curse of inspectorialism does on the Education Department. What is wanted is not an impetus for men to throw down their books and pick up a whip, but rather a system of interchange of headmasters for the purpose of relieving each other's work and encouraging the tired and fagged assistant, who would ever look to their visit as that of a friend and an adviser, instead of a fault-finding, carping critic, which your present system has a strong tendency to make of its biggest-hearted and best inspectors. Of the devotion to duty of the education staff too much cannot be said, but we are not answering the question 'Is it well with the child' by taking a girl of 15 or 16 years of age out of a school, giving her six months in the Adelaide Observation School, and then labelling her 'school teacher,' and sending her out to some little outback school, where many of the pupils are physically her superiors, and where on the generosity of their parents depends this teacher's chance of being decently housed and fed. I do hope that when the inspection of schools comes to be an organised factor in the new Bill instead of making an attempt to bring to a dead level the great private institutions of the day we will devote a little of our inspectorial supervision to those outback schools, when I am sure the public conscience will demand that something better than a tin hut and a 15 or 16 year old teacher is necessary to successfully answer our query on behalf of the country residents. 'Is it well with the child?'"