

# MENTAL DEFECTIVES.

## Problems Explained.

At the Rotary Club's luncheon at Balour's Cafe on Friday, Dr. F. S. Hone delivered an interesting address on "The problems of the mentally defective." Mr. I. H. Burgess presided.

Dr. Hone said the problem of the mentally defective was of such national importance and had in recent years aroused such public interest, that any organization which had as its object that of service to the community was sure to take it up and study it with particular interest. That was the more important, because at the present day a good many people whose interest had been aroused in the subject were wont to speak of it as if it were a new problem, or one easily remedied by the application of certain drastic remedies. On the other hand, those who went deeply into the subject became more and more impressed with the difficulty of adequately dealing with the mental defective with equal justice to individual rights and to the best interests of the community. Mental deficiency was usually defined as that state in which the mind has failed to attain normal development, and mental defective are understood to include all persons afflicted with mental defectiveness from birth or from an early age to such an extent that they are incapable of managing themselves or their own affairs, who for their own welfare or the welfare of others or of the community required supervision, control, or care, but who are not insane or of unsound mind to such an extent as to require commitment to an institution. This in general terms is the definition adopted by the law of England and of America with the object of excluding those who come under the term "insane or of unsound mind"—the latter being generally acquired in adolescence or later life.

### An Acute Problem.

It was usual, the doctor continued, to divide mental defectives into three or four classes, as follows:—(a) Idiots—those whose intelligence never developed beyond that of a child of three years, and who were incapable of guarding themselves from common physical dangers; (b) imbeciles—whose intelligence did not exceed that of a child from three to seven years of age, and whose mental defectiveness was so pronounced that they are incapable of managing themselves or their affairs or being taught to do so; (c) feeble-minded—whose intelligence was equal to that of children from seven to 12 years of age, who could be taught a certain amount, but who never became capable of earning their own livelihood and playing their proper part in community life without some supervision. The problem had become more acute in recent years, and a great deal of emphasis had been laid on the increasing numbers of recognised mental defectives, but it was probable that that was partly because the problem had become more apparent through the development of the last 50 years. While the community was mainly agricultural and engaged in manual labour, slight types of mental defect would not be so apparent. Following the introduction of steam and electric power every extension of machinery, with the extra call for mental alertness, would make those defects more apparent. The introduction of compulsory education 50 years ago, with its insistence upon universal reading and writing, would bring to light those who were incapable of learning those arts. The aggregation of so much greater numbers into cities would leave the adolescent mental and moral deficient more open to the temptation of anti-social behaviour and so would bring to light many high-grade morons who would have not become apparent under old conditions. It has been shown that some classes of mental deficiency depended upon the non-existence or defective development of the other parts of the human brain. Studies of family histories, and fresh insight into the laws of inheritance, have proved that two mental defectives of this type, if mated, would always produce mental defectives. In America two-thirds of the cases belonged to this type, the other third owed their mental deficiency to faults in environment either before, or soon after birth.

### Position in South Australia.

It was impossible (the speaker proceeded) to state this accurately, because so far no attempt at any survey had been made. In England and America it was that one in every 200 of the population was mentally defective, and there was no reason to suppose that conditions were much better in Australia. It had been proved elsewhere that the removal of physical defects frequently enabled backward children to come up to the normal intelligence standard, who would otherwise remain deficient through life. In South Australia a Mental Defectives Act had been passed in 1913, but unlike such legislation elsewhere, it included in its scope both the insane and congenitally defective, specifically mentioning idiots, and defining imbeciles in a way that a first sight would cover a proportion of those who were usually termed "feeble-minded or morons."

In regard to special educational measures no decisive measures had been taken to provide those. Twenty years ago Minda had been started with the object of giving special training to those who were mentally defective. Because, however, that was the only institution of its kind in the State, it was speedily compelled to become a refuge for children far more defective than the type for which it was originally intended, and because no other institution had since been provided, Minda to-day was faced with the problem of how to receive further applicants for admission and training in the childhood stage, and at the same time to deal with those who had grown up within its walls and who from the very nature of things were unable to fend for themselves. At present there were no institutions for children who were idiots. Those who survived the age of 10 were accommodated at the Mental Hospital. Feeble-minded children of school-going age, either remained at home without proper training, or attended State schools, where they were a burden alike to the teachers and other children, became the butt in playtime of those younger than themselves, or were accommodated with difficulty at Minda. Feeble-minded epileptic children were received under protest in Minda. Older epileptics who were feeble-minded either remained at home or were compelled to go into the Mental Hospital, because there was no farm colony where they could be allowed to work. Minda had purchased extra land at Blackwood with the object of providing a colony where these feeble-minded adults could labour, with benefit alike to themselves, and to the State, but lack of funds prevented that project from being proceeded with. The morons of adolescence filled reformatories and rescue homes, and the authorities were compelled to release them at the age of 21 years, even though they were recognised to be of slight mental or moral deficiency, and they went to swell the criminal or anti-social classes. To combat that a persistent campaign was necessary to show that such care was for the child's own benefit. A preliminary to such a campaign was that in the idea of segregation they must include measures for the training of the child in the best direction in which his deficient mentality could express itself, and they must give him opportunity to use his limited powers to the best advantage, otherwise the cost of maintenance of the institutions would be so immense that it would become prohibitive. Any scheme, concluded the doctor, involved a reconstruction of most of the current ideas among the lay population on their educational system. A recognition of the fact that just as there was only a certain proportion of children who were capable of benefitting by a high school education, so there was another proportion who could not even attain the highest development possible to themselves by the ordinary primary curriculum, but needed to be trained along manual, rather than intellectual lines.

### "A Large and Increasing Menace."

The Director of Education (Mr. W. T. McCoy) said that the Education Department was faced with the difficulty of dealing with a large number of morons (a class of mental defective). At present the department had only one medical inspector, but the Government had notified its intention of increasing the medical staff to six, and he hoped that they would be appointed shortly. During his travels in Great Britain and America he had found that mental defectives were taught in special schools, such trades as tailoring, wirework, woodwork, and bootmaking. Large piano manufacturers had approached the authorities and offered to accept anything that the mental defectives made. There were other trades for which they might be trained. A committee had been sitting in Adelaide for some time to evolve a scheme for dealing with mental defectives, but they had not yet gone very far. He suggested that the Rotary Club should approach the Government to give Dr. Hone permission to stand at the Bar of the House of Assembly and explain what a large and increasing menace the mental defectives were to the community.

News 2 JUN 1924

Mr. Frank D. Jackman, a son of Mr. A. J. Jackman, of Glenelg, was among those who received the degree of Bachelor of Engineering and Diploma in Applied Science at the University of Adelaide to-day. Mr. Jackman, who is 23 years of age, won the entrance scholarship given by Prince Alfred Old Collegians' Masonic Lodge. He had a fine record at college. He completed the necessary year's practical experience in engineering at No. 3 Lock and at Lake Victoria on the River Murray. He is now in charge of No. 2 Lock.

# EDUCATION CONFERENCE

## HELPING THE ADULT.

LONDON, May 29.

The Imperial Education Conference at Wembley Park to-day discussed the education of adults.

Mr. Fisher, a former president of the Education Board, paid a tribute to the Workers' Educational Movement, which had established a living contact between the mind of the industrial democracy and the forward movement of thought in the universities. During the war 3,000,000 soldiers attended the education classes, which was the biggest educational experiment in history.

Dr. Albert Mansbridge urged the necessity of interesting adults in the Empire. Not long ago, to mention the Empire at a Labor meeting, whether of students or politicians, was to court trouble. He advocated the establishment of a Chair of Imperial Studies at every university and university college. The secretaries of the Carnegie Trust and the Educational Settlement Association spoke of the cultural value of Imperial studies.

Herald

2 JUN 1924

## AUSTRALIAN BUILDING TIMBER.

Interesting information was obtained in an interview from Mr. E. Julius (Conservator of Forests) on Friday concerning a process of preparing Australian woods for building purposes which had hitherto not been employed. Mr. Julius said that kiln-drying of Pinus Insignis growing in Government plantations had proved that it was a timber equal to the very best on the market for building purposes. The amount of moisture which was extracted from the timber by kiln-drying brought it within the radius of practical building timber. The amount of moisture varied from 36 per cent. to 51 per cent. of the weight of the timber placed into the kiln. Previously the timber had not been employed in building. It had never been kiln-dried or properly seasoned. The wood thus produced in this State would enter into competition with Oregon and Baltic pine, which was now imported from abroad. Indications pointed to a considerable stock of this timber being available. It had only been used up to the present for making boxes. The present Pinus Insignis plantations in the State totalled 8736 acres, a large proportion of which was ready for cutting. This coming season about 2000 acres would be planted with this pine.

## AUSTRALIAN WOODS

On Friday, Mr. E. Julius (Conservator of Forests) exhibited a fine compilation upon Australian forestry. In describing the book, Mr. Julius said: "The Australian forest tree has one more remarkable volume to chronicle its virtues, and again from the versatile genius of those giants in research, Messrs R. T. Baker and H. G. Smith, in their Australian wood fibres." It is yet fresh in our memories that the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science awarded the Mueller medal to Mr. R. T. Baker for his eminent services to botany, particularly in regard to the genus eucalypt. Then followed the magnum opus, "A Research on the Eucalypt" by Messrs. Baker and Smith. This great epic was thought to be the last joint monograph, and it is with great delight that we hail the evidence of their continued research. The wood pulp industry of Australia is not yet even in its infancy. It has yet to be born. A factor in its birth is the volume just issued, which clearly indicates that certain species of Australian forest trees will produce pulp of the highest economic value. When it is considered that Australia is paying several millions per annum for the privilege of using foreign paper that our own forests can produce, and that on the top of that, we are told that unless we produce our own pulp, we must look forward to either doing without it or paying for it at practically prohibitive prices in the near future, it is time that we took courage and followed the path blazed for us by these pioneers of research."

Mr. N. C. Burgess, B.E., left Adelaide on Thursday by the Orville for London and subsequently Manchester, where he will fulfil a two years' engagement with the Metropolitan Vickers Electrical Company, which is associated with the West-Ingthous electrical concerns. He was one of the two graduates nominated by the Adelaide University this year in accordance with a scheme by which the Orient line of steamers annually grant free pas-



Mr. N. C. Burgess.

sages to Europe to two graduates nominated by the University. Mr. Burgess was born in 1903 at Norwood, and in 1917, while a pupil at the Norwood High School, gained first place in the junior commercial examination conducted in connection with the University. In the following year he went through both the senior and higher public courses and was placed second on the list for the examination in the latter. He was then studying at the Adelaide High School, and his success gained him a four years' scholarship at the Adelaide University in electrical engineering. From 1919 to 1922 he gained four successive passes with high honors, and in 1923 served the year's training necessary for the Bachelor of Engineering course at Messrs. Hamble & Sons, Geelong, Victoria. The same year he obtained the degree of B.E., with its diploma of Applied Science, and the fellowship of the South Australian School of Mines. Mr. Burgess has a wide circle of friends, who tendered him farewell gatherings before his departure.

Advertiser

8 JUN 1924

## EDUCATION CONFERENCE.

Last September a number of people interested in school problems held a most successful conference on new methods in education. It was found that many questions arose that demanded attention from all teachers; and round these the Educational Society has arranged another conference, commencing on June 12, at the North-terrace Institute.

The Educational Society is the only organisation in South Australia of a voluntary kind that represents all the school activities of the State. University, secondary, primary, kindergarten, church and secular, State and private schools meet in these discussions on common ground with immense benefit to the schools and the State. The programme is a courageous and praiseworthy attempt to keep abreast of the stream of educational thought. A plea is being made for cultural subjects such as art and music. On the other hand the scientist is given his chance to defend the trend of education towards the laboratory and away from the library. New thought and methods are represented by discussions on intelligence tests and eurhythmics, and revolutionary ideas on syllabus and timetable will find able expression. Echoes of the last public examinations will be revived by the papers on the teaching of English; and the position of the classics will be reviewed.

Advertiser

8 JUN 1924

At a meeting of the Adelaide Hospital Board on Monday, Dr. E. Angus Johnson, honorary physician, resigned after 20 years' service. The resignation was accepted with regret, and a resolution was passed placing on record the board's appreciation of the valuable service rendered by the doctor.