

ADV. 9. 7. 26
EDUCATION SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Training for Future Citizenship.

New Department at University Wanted.

Speaking before members of the Education Society at the Institute Building yesterday, Dr. F. S. Hone recommended the formation of departments of Personal and Public Hygiene at all Universities in Australia.

Dr. Helen Mayo presided at the afternoon session of the annual conference of the Education Society, which was continued at the Institute Building, on Thursday. "Health and Citizenship" formed the subject of discussion. In introducing the speakers, Dr. Mayo pointed out that people must of necessity be trained in a knowledge of their own health if they were to be expected to exercise self control. Children for instance, required a good deal of education to induce them to take a daily bath, and to take meals at regular and appointed hours. It was not wise, however, to get children interested in those things to the exclusion of anything else. When a stimulus to interest was given the desired result followed in the natural course of events. Emotions should not be too active a principle in child life. As an example of this she said the anxiety of parents too freely expressed, often induced fear in a child. Girls and women on the other hand were often inordinately proud of the fact that they would not "give way," when, as a matter of fact, they were afraid of being considered cowards. They should be taught not to hand trouble on to other people, especially in the matter of infectious disease. Care for others in another direction would be reflected in later years in care of traffic. Laws of health should be framed so that everybody would have an opportunity of observing them. (Applause.)

Three Phases of Thought.

Dr. F. S. Hone said health and education must go hand in hand if they aspired to fine citizenship. He wished to point out how great a part a true educationist could play in this, in advancing both individual and public health. The two departments of health and education were alike in their aims, and their inter-dependence. The Elementary Education Act of England, which was the foundation of modern educational measures, was framed in 1870, and two years later they had the Public Health Act that marked the beginning of the modern campaign for health in England. The Compulsory Education Act and the first Public Health Act of this State were passed in the seventies. Since then there had been three phases of thought with regard to the reaction of schools on the health of the community. In the first period it might be said that the health of the child was disregarded, for the health reformer was engrossed with other "nuisances" than children. The teachers' attention was concentrated on the child's mind. Gradually, however, attention was drawn to myopia, which developed from defective lighting in schools, and to scoliosis, which arose from improper seating accommodation. Sanatoriums turned their attention to the provision of proper accommodation and equipment, and this stage passed.

Infection.

Apparently it had not been foreseen that the congregation of many children for many hours daily would be a powerful factor in the spread of certain infectious diseases. It was gradually recognised that measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, and scarlet fever were essentially school-borne diseases. This brought about the cooperation of school and health authorities in organising measures of defence against them. The third stage was the present recognition of the true relationship of the educational authorities to communal health, in which to fight disease, but as a field in which to fight disease, but as a weapon to wield for the advancement of the standard of public health, of the school child, not as one to be merely defended against contracting disease, but as a future citizen to be trained in habits of personal hygiene, and in that community spirit which was the basis of all national health and true citizenship. The teacher was one of the most powerful forces for training the citizen of the future to a true attitude towards national health. The increasing insistence on open air classes, the inculcation from the child's earliest years of habits of personal cleanliness in the school unconsciously created in him habits that lessened his exposure to infection in later life. (Applause.)

Child Training.

One of the many impressions made on him when he first attended a State school (the first that was opened in Adelaide), was the daily inspection at morning assembly for clean hands and clean boots. In

later years he had realised still more the quiet and ever-widening influence of the teachers in raising the standard of health as he had wandered through the kindergarten classes and had seen the children going through the drill of "This is the way we wash our faces," and seen the teacher stop to point out one child who was not washing behind the ears. The pictures of ideal diet were of great value too. All these things had a great effect on the health of the community. For instance, the child trained to wash his hands before each meal was much less likely to develop painter's colic in later years if he became a house-painter, and in other vocations with special hazards from lead, his training regarding the value of fresh air and open windows lessened his susceptibility. The highest health in an individual was an attitude of mind, not observant of their own body, but unconscious of it, almost automatically living in obedience to those laws of health in which they had been trained, and with the mind free to observe the ills of others, and a body free to work to prevent those ills. The direct health lessons were therefore probably not more important than the indirect ones. In his travels throughout Australia last year with the Health Commission he had been struck by the way in which the officers of the State Education Department were seeking to carry out the ideals of which he had spoken. Teachers were receiving special training in psychology, and in hygiene and allied subjects, so that they might intelligently guide along the paths of health the children whom they taught. In the lessons in cookery and the economical buying of suitable food, the housewives of the future were being trained in what was one of the most important, as it had been one of the most neglected, factors, in building up a healthy and virile race. (Applause.)

Medical Examination.

The health ideal set up was the examination of each child at least three times during school life by medical and dental officers. If leading insurance companies of America found this payable, surely it was also a national economy. The child came to adult life in this way with the idea of regular medical and dental examination as an established habit. The systematic examination of children of a schoolgoing age had led to the discovery that many already suffered from nose, teeth, and throat defects. This had directed attention to the hitherto neglected period between two and six years of age. Other special problems had been dealt with also. The same standard with regard to these matters did not obtain in the private denominational or secondary schools, in his opinion, and the regular teachers did not seem in any way to relate ordinary lessons to health questions, as was done in the State primary schools. Physiology, for instance, was taught in girls' schools, but merely as an examination subject, without relation to practical hygiene. There was a valuable field unoccupied here, especially in relation to girls' schools. They were rightly accustomed to look to their universities for a lead in all matters of education and citizenship, but in the matter under discussion there was little or no interest evinced. In the Adelaide University the authorities had for years shown their interest in the bodily welfare of the students by the maintenance of sports and playing grounds, and though of late there had been murmuring on the score of expense, he was assured that the high traditions of the past would be maintained, and that they would continue to recognise that their responsibility was for the training of the whole man like in his intellectual, physical, and social activities. This wider outlook on health and citizenship was a comparatively modern development. The lectureship on preventive medicine was the next to last to be founded in the medical school, and was only instituted six years ago. No medical faculty in Australia had yet made any deliberate endeavor to carry out the resolution passed two or three years ago by the General Medical Council of England, that the ideal of prevention should run through all classes throughout the medical curriculum. They could not do it with their present organisation, and if this was so in the medical schools, how could they expect a wider outlook in the University as a whole? Yet was it not an anomaly that educational students should be able to go to a University professor for training in a true outlook in English literature, yet must go to their own medical officer for training on a true outlook in public health?

Work for the Universities.

Was it not a contradiction that throughout their primary schools every opportunity should be taken to impress on future citizens the importance of health, yet when the pick of these students reached adult life the matter was neglected? Should they

healthy and happy exercise for their young people, and at the same time training them in the ethics of good citizenship. (Applause.)

Both speakers were heartily thanked for their instructive addresses.

VOCATION AND CITIZENSHIP.

SOLUTION DEPENDS ON THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Professor Rennie presided over the evening session in the unavoidable absence of the Minister of Education (Hon. L. L. Hill), who sent a message appreciative of the work of the conference and its objects.

The Chairman said his earlier days gave him a sympathetic attitude towards teachers. There were great difficulties in those days, but he was conservative enough to think that there were also advantages, and in some respects the modern system might not be an entire improvement on the old. They had then no examinations to look forward to, but on the other hand such a subject as the one they were discussing that night was not taught.

The Power of Democracy.

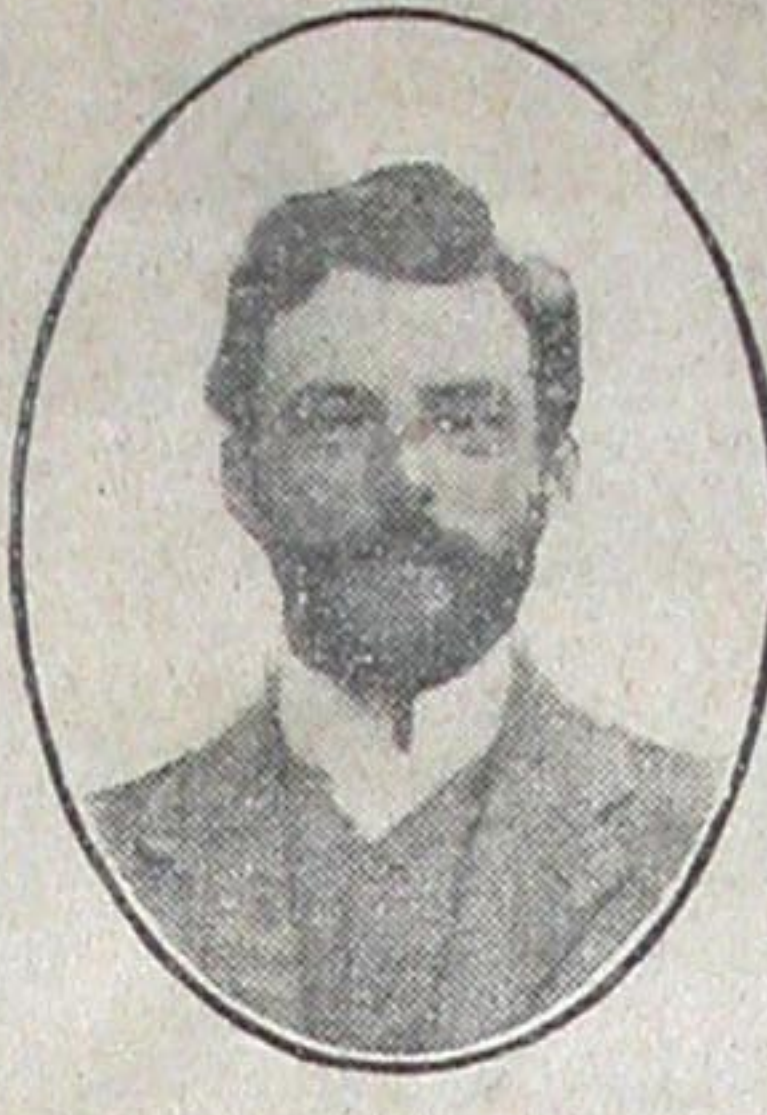
Professor Chapman, speaking on "Vocation and citizenship," said the increasing complexity of the social organism was one of the characteristics of the age. Invention and scientific discovery were striding forward at an accelerating rate, and almost every notable invention required a new race of specialists and added new trades to the ever increasing list. It was estimated that in the complex society of to-day there were 10,000 different sorts of callings at which a man might earn a living. There was another feature of present society that was producing changes as fundamental and important as scientific invention. The spirit of democracy was now the great controlling force among the nations, and everywhere the workers were demanding a greater share of the comforts and luxuries their labor helped to create. Everywhere the control of the policy of nations was passing out of the hands of the privileged few and into the power of the masses of the people. The ordinary man got a greater reward for his labor, worked under much easier conditions, and could attain a higher standard of comfort than his grandfather, and he was also called upon to take a greater responsibility in the direction of the forces that controlled the progress of the State. The power of democracy was a rising food that they could not stem, even if they would, and the great problem of the present age was so to control it that it shall carry them forward to greater heights of progress, to a higher standard of human welfare, and not sweep them down into the valley of desolation. That was the greatest of all problems confronting them at the present time. Upon its solution depended whether civilisation should stand or fall; whether it was the lawn of a glorious future for mankind, or whether it should sink into the limbo of forgotten things as so many epochs of civilisation had done before.

Work of the Schoolmaster.

The solving of this problem, he said, was not to be reached by any one simple recipe, nor did it depend entirely upon any one class in the community. He was addressing a gathering of educationists, and he certainly believed that its successful solution depended largely on the work of the schoolmaster. (Applause.) For it was a mere truism to say that a democratic form of government could be successful only with a well-educated people. Not only must they have a people educated in the sense of being well informed, but a reasonable proportion of them must be possessed of noble and generous ideals. That particularly was the province of the teacher. Of far more importance than that he should implant knowledge sufficient to pass examinations was that he should systematically plant ideals of honor and thoroughness, of beauty and duty, which might develop to become the unconscious controlling force of his pupils through life long after they had forgotten their algebra or lost the trick of finding a cube root. A community in order to be prosperous must be like a well-oiled machine. Every cog must fit into the place, and friction, which was the great source of all loss of energy, must be reduced to a minimum. In the ideal community every man would be engaged in work for which he was well fitted. Contentment, which was the lubricating oil of the State machine, depended upon a number of factors. It depended upon remuneration and conditions of work, matters on which he did not propose to touch. But it depended also to a large degree upon the right man being put into the right place.

The Training Necessary.

There was small wonder that quite commonly both the boy and his parents were rather uncertain exactly what it was they did want, and even the teacher when approached might not be able to clarify the position. The result was not infrequently that a boy started out upon a course with only a very indefinite idea what possibilities were ahead of him, and what additional educational training, if any, he ought to get. Reliable and definite information of this kind which could be comparatively easily gathered, should be, it seemed to him, available at every school.



Dr. F. S. Hone.

be content with less than a complete medical examination of all students as they entered the University and at intervals throughout their course, with complete records, and possibility of advice—not orders—as to their best mode of life for the attainment of the highest health? This would involve the establishment at each University a properly organised department of personal and public hygiene, just as there were departments of physics and physiology. As such a department would require a fully trained, whole-time head, for which an amateur like himself would not be eligible, he could not be accused of self-seeking in urging this reform. Such a department would be the main-spring of that organisation in health education of which he had been speaking, and the head of it would not only lecture to medical and educational students, or confine his activities to the life of University students, but should be the fount and inspiration of all those efforts for the education of the whole community to realise the high position that health should hold in any true conception of citizenship. (Applause.)

The Value of Play.

Mrs. T. G. Osborn read an excellent paper on the relation of health training to citizenship in later years. She pointed out that the object of the school was the all round and harmonious development of the pupil, planned with a view to his immediate needs and future aims. During the early years of childhood rapid growth took place, necessitating a brisk stream of blood, and this in its turn necessitated movement to assure it. The more this desire for movement was encouraged the better was the development of the child along normal lines. His bodily and mental faculties were developed together. It was through play that the child made his experiences and formed his ideas. At school, his activities were gradually led to mental work, and in order to make up for the sedentary form of life imposed in consequence, gymnastics and organised games were provided. The benefits from the exercise thus gained were more than merely physical, for sportsmasters and mistresses had much to do with the practical side of character building. They developed the courage and endurance necessary to those who wished to emulate some hero of whom they had learned. Among the ancient Greeks, physical training reached its highest ideals because they understood the close connection between the mental and physical development of life. Blind man's bluff and leapfrog were survivals of old Greek school games. Then as later, however, men were tempted to make physical training the aim of their life, and, as a race of professional athletes and gymnasts arose interest in the public games died out, because amateurs could not hope to compete against them. Euripides had declared that the lives of professional athletes were of no value to the State. Instant obedience and courage and the ability to work with one another, subordinating personal interest, as in team work, were all called for. The Australian climate and the possibility of an outdoor life gave this country many advantages, but they did not always follow them up. In many American Universities physical education was insisted upon, and in Sweden every teacher had to have a diploma in this as well as in other educational work. There were few specialist teachers in Australia, and she regretted that there were no training colleges to give an intensive training in physical education, such as obtained at Bedford College, in England. There should be excellent results from the recently formed Folk Dancing and Singing Society in this State, and it marked the beginning of a movement which must be of aesthetic benefit. She also commended the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements, which were performing wonderful work in the way of providing