

Register November 26/86.

THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
ELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—My apology for troubling you on a subject which can scarcely be one of general interest is that I have no other way of addressing members of Senate before it is too late to be of practical use for this year. I have given notice of a motion which I consider of immense importance to the welfare of the University in connection with this election, but the Standing Orders provide that the election shall take place first and the motion be considered afterwards. I do not propose going into the merits of the case at this time; but I wish to ask members of the Senate to make a point of attending the meeting, when I intend moving a suspension of the Standing Orders to allow the motion to be discussed before the election, and I shall ask those gentlemen who differ from me to object as much as they like to the question itself, but not to exercise their powerful influence to burke discussion at the only time it can have a practical bearing.

I am, Sir, &c.,

W. PEEL NESBITT.

22, North-terrace, November 25.

The Register Nov^r 29/86.

THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL.

At the special meeting of the University to be held on Wednesday next some important business is to be done. First of all, according to the printed programme, seven gentlemen are to be elected to the Council. There are thirteen candidates for these vacancies, and the electors must be congratulated upon having so large an opportunity of exercising a wise choice. This election is by no means an unimportant matter. The members of the Council have the supreme control of the affairs of the University, and it behoves the Senate to observe great care in the selection. Five of the vacancies have occurred in due course under the provisions of the University Act, and the remainder are due to the resignation of two medical gentlemen when recently seeking offices of profit in the Medical School. Amongst

those who have resigned their seats in obedience to the Act is Sir Henry Ayers, the late Treasurer. Rumour has it that he will not seek re-election on the ground of advancing years and multiplicity of engagements. To this reason is to be attributed the recent action of Sir Henry in resigning the Treasurership. The public will be sorry to think that the University is to be deprived of Sir Henry's able and sage advice. He has had a long experience as a member of the Council, and he is able to bring to the conduct of its affairs a sound judgment, a practical knowledge of details and an amount of business capacity which cannot fail to be serviceable to the University. It may be hoped that the rumour is devoid of foundation in fact, and that Sir Henry Ayers will yet be prepared to devote many years to the service of the highest educational institution in the colony.

Closely connected with the election of members of the Council is the question, to be raised by Dr. Poulton, of the advisability of introducing the system of proxies. It is easy to understand the question from the standpoint of the medical men. The majority of them are strongly opposed to the new Medical School, and they want to make their influence felt. But they are met with this difficulty at the outset. The votes of medical men who live in the country cannot be secured.

These gentlemen cannot afford, in justice to themselves or to their patients, to absent themselves from the centres of their practice, and so the Adelaide opponents of the Medical School are left to fight the battle alone. It is supposed that, if the system of proxies were adopted, the medical graduates who are opposed to the scheme would carry the day. There is, as everybody knows, much to be said in favour of this system; but it is also largely and strongly to be condemned. It is opposed to the general usage, for one thing; furthermore, it has a tendency to make discussion useless and a waste of time. What is the use of discussing a question

if one man in the meeting has proxies in his pocket sufficient to decide the matter? He can burke discussion, or, worse, he can render it fruitless. We confess that we are at a loss to appreciate the agitation against the Medical School at this stage. If the scheme were wholly objectionable — as we believe it to be—the opponents of it should have taken up arms last month when it was proposed for the consideration of the Senate. Now the contest is hopeless, for these opponents are arguing against a conclusion which has already been reached. If wisely guided the Senate will reject this motion for the introduction of the proxy system.

One of the most important motions to be proposed at the meeting of the Senate is that tabled by Dr. Nesbitt, and runs:—
“That it is not desirable that more than two members of the Council should hold offices of emolument in the University.”
To go no further afield than Melbourne, we find that the presence of paid officers on the governing body has given rise to much complaint. There even the Chancellor was a servant of the Council, and besides him there were several Professors on that body. At the present time the Council of the Adelaide University contains two paid members—Professor Boulger and Dr. Stirling. The former holds the position that was previously occupied by Professor

Lamb, and the latter owes his inclusion in the Council not to his lectureship on Physiology, but to his standing as a graduate, and to his general status in the community. Supposing that Dr. Gardner and Dr. Way are re-elected there will be four members of the Council—or one-fifth of the total number—who will have a pecuniary interest in the affairs of the University. This might lead to great difficulties in other circumstances, but at present it would rather seem as if the presence of professional University men in the Council would be an advantage. They may reasonably be expected to know more about things than gentlemen who are elected simply by reason of their position in society. The Senate has now an opportunity of declaring itself on the subject. Two gentlemen resigned their seats because they were seeking offices of emolument. If the Senate re-elects them the question is answered for good or for evil.

It is worthy of notice, by-the-way, that amongst those gentlemen who have been admitted by the Council *ad eundem gradum* is Mr. Charles Todd. The public will remember that, much to the gratification of the people of South Australia and much to the honour of Mr. Todd, the University of Cambridge conferred upon