

IN EDUCATION'S CAUSE.

Australian State Teachers Confer.

Minister's Desire For Expansion.

The fourth annual conference of the Australian Teachers' Federation was opened in the lecture room at the Institute, North terrace, on Tuesday morning, by the Minister of Education (Hon. L. L. Hill). The Lord Mayor (Mr. C. R. J. Glover) welcomed the visiting delegates on behalf of the citizens of Adelaide. The President (Mr. A. G. Alanson) conducted the proceedings.

The Chairman welcomed the Minister and extended congratulations to him upon his elevation to office. He said the delegates trusted that his occupation of that office would be of great benefit to the cause they had so much at heart. (Applause.)

New Minister's First Function.

Mr. Hill said it was pleasing to him that the first official function which he had to attend as Minister of Education was an interstate conference of school teachers. He congratulated the Australian Teachers' Federation on having convened such a gathering for the fourth time in the history of Teachers' Association. They had some 9,500 schools, and 26,000 school teachers in Australia, and therefore it was necessary for a conference of that character to be held so that an interchange of views and methods might be obtained. Fortunately for South Australia, its Director of Education had had a trip abroad. He believed Mr. McCoy had returned improved in health, and he was positive much broadened in mind so far as education was concerned. Therefore they were looking for the Director's report on his observations to be favourably received by Parliament, and hoping that in that State there would be a move forward. A great amount of money had been spent in education. Australia was spending approximately £7,000,000 per annum. Each State had its own independent system, therefore it was necessary for the teachers to assist the Governments in bringing about uniformity. It was remarkable that in New South Wales they were spending to-day something like £11 7/6 per child (average attendance) on education; in Queensland, £9 14/; in Western Australia, £8 15/; in Victoria, £7 15/6; Tasmania, £7 3/6; and in South Australia, £7 11/.

A Voice—There's your chance!

The Minister said he was very pleased to hear the interjection. He did not wish to reflect on the magnificent work done by the Education Department throughout South Australia, but he knew that the teachers were working under very great difficulties indeed. If the Government could, and Parliament would permit, it would push on with the great questions which had to be overcome. For instance, there was education in the country, where the conditions of the teaching staff would have to be improved.

Overcrowding of Schools.

He had already called for a report regarding the overcrowding of schools, and had asked for the information to be supplied in degrees, so that the Government might deal with the worst cases first. Remarkable progress had been made in education, but a much further distance had to be travelled. In technical education the State was lagging behind, and the Government realized that the greatest bar to secondary education was partyism. His party said that the brains of the nation must be developed, and it believed it should be carried out to the letter, especially with regard to children leaving primary and going on to secondary schools, in which cases some assistance should be afforded them, so that they might avail themselves of the opportunities offered in the secondary schools. He had called for a report on what it would cost for the Government to supply free schoolbooks for all children who had gained their qualifying certificates, and wished to go on to the high schools. His party contended that education was the hope of the world, and it was not going to see that branch of public expenditure reduced because of the struggle that was resulting as the aftermath of war. The Government was now in a position to offer the Public Teachers' Association in South Australia a tribunal. There must be satisfaction in the service in order to bring about efficiency, but up

to the present he could not say what the nature of that tribunal would be. As Minister of Education he desired to encourage the very best feelings between the education staff and the administration, which was the Government. He desired to follow on the lines of conciliation rather than through the Arbitration Court, so that they could meet and the heads of departments could discuss questions with the heads of the Teachers' Associations. Modern school buildings must play a prominent part in what he might term modern politics. He hoped the deliberations of conference would reflect credit upon the noble teaching profession. (Applause.)

Lord Mayor's Address.

The Lord Mayor greeted the interstate delegates, on behalf of the citizens of Adelaide. In South Australia they were fortunate in having Mr. W. T. McCoy as Director of Education. He hoped their deliberations would be successful, and that they would have a happy sojourn in Adelaide. (Applause.)

Teaching the Adolescent.

The Director of Education (Mr. W. T. McCoy) said it augged well for the future education of children to see so many teachers who had given up their Easter holidays to attend to business. They were engaged on the task of making good citizens, and they would welcome any suggestion tending to stimulate the already great interest in the question. Their agenda paper was the finest he had ever seen. Perhaps their greatest problem was that of dealing with the adolescent. Most of the States had partially solved the problem through their high schools, but he would point out that in South Australia they had children taking subjects which they could not hope to gain the mastery of in the time spent at school. In a number of cases the students remained for a year, and were then stamped as high-school children. He hoped the Government would remedy that by providing junior technical schools for those boys and girls who intended to enter some trade or commercial calling. The domestic training of girls was invaluable. A girl at the high school was not going to receive the type of education to qualify her as a typist or a factory employe, but in the domestic school she would receive training that would enable her to undertake her duties as a wife. Other countries had tackled the question a great deal better than South Australia had. In Ontario the compulsory age was 16 years, and every child was sent to a school suited to its particular needs. Denmark dealt with the problem in another way. The boy at 14 years of age left school, but at the age of 18 years went back to what was known as the people's high school and received a course of training for six or seven months. The child was allowed to choose certain subjects. Norway, Finland, the United States, and England had copied that system. It would appeal to the Governments of Australia to know that that great movement in Denmark cost the country next to nothing. It was run by private enterprise and the schoolmasters raised the money. The teaching was subsidized, but the children scraped and schemed to get through. In Sweden they kept a grip on the boy until he was 16 years of age by making him attend school for 180 hours a year for two years. The speaker also referred to methods adopted in other countries. He was glad that a paper was to be delivered on mental deficiency. That question had never been touched in that State. The Victorian scheme had the germs of the right thing in it. Other countries attacked the question in a way they had never dreamed of. Practically every large provincial school in Great Britain had a building at one end of the playground for mental defectives or cripples, and who were treated by teachers properly trained. Their Apprenticeship Act in South Australia was a fine one, and had been sought for far and wide. Under the Act the apprentice gave four hours a week for three years of the employers' time, for which they were fully paid, and two hours of their own time, to learn those branches of their trade which they could not learn in a large workshop. Any resolutions that were passed by the conference would receive full consideration by the department. (Applause.)

Visitors' Opinions.

Mr. J. Waddle, M.Sc. (Queensland), expressed the thanks of the conference to the Minister of Education, the Lord Mayor, and the Director of Education, for their remarks. He did not think it was quite right to say that the child who had attended high schools for two years had missed a great deal. There was that about secondary education which could not be placed in the curriculum, but which a child must carry away at a most impressionable age. That was the most valued part of technical education. He was glad to be in Adelaide. It was a most pleasant city, and he had enjoyed its beauty since he arrived.

Mr. H. L. Grace, B.A. (Tasmania), seconded. He thought that in the Minister of Education they had a man who pos-

essed sympathy of the right and practical kind.

The sentiment was heartily acclaimed. In responding, the Minister of Education said he thought the State would benefit if they doubled the education grant, because the great majority of the unemployed were unskilled workers. It was an economic question with which the Governments must grapple. By spending more money on education, they would add to the wealth of the people and aid production. He would follow the deliberations of the conference with interest, and any resolutions put forward would receive every consideration by him.

President's Address.

The President (Mr. A. G. Alanson) then delivered his presidential address, which is reported elsewhere.

Report.

The annual report was submitted and disclosed that the council had dealt with the resolutions of last conference, as follows:—

The executive committee has devoted continuous attention to the matriculation standard for Australian Universities. The results of its labours are seen in the proposals and scheme now submitted to the conference. The docu-

ment represents many hours of research and strenuous labour. Special attention has been given to promoting schemes for connecting primary, secondary, and technical education with apprenticeship. The committee as operating in New South Wales more immediately is able to report that the Minister of Education (Hon. A. E. Bruntnell) of that State has developed educational schemes extensively following upon his promise to the conference of 1923 in Sydney. The work of combining the several State movements into one report is commended to the notice of the executive for 1924-25. Consistent with the policy of progress for which the executive stands, support to the introduction of wireless with all its many possibilities into the schools has been given. In New South Wales the Minister for Education (Mr. Bruntnell), is fully sympathetic in practical manner in establishing wireless connection in all schools. Real progress has been made, and a committee of teachers, together with the Superintendent of Technical Education (Mr. Nangle) is engaged upon working out all details. The movement is heartily commended to all State Departments of Education. The difficulty of providing special educational facilities for children of abnormal minds is gradually being overcome by the persistent scientific consideration which the question is receiving in all States. The different States have close interest in the means by which teachers may exchange between the different States without loss to themselves, or injury to the opportunities for promotion to the fellows in the State to which they go. The executive during the past year has moved towards the expansion and further expression of Australian feeling by getting into educational communication with far distant teachers of the Commonwealth. As one practical outcome of the far flung communications, proposals had been made to the Minister of Education, in Sydney, to establish a hostel for the accommodation of Pacific children seeking education for which no opportunities exist in the Pacific Isles. The Pacific Islands have more than trade interests for Australia, and educational links such as would be forged by educating Pacific children in Sydney, will prove powerful holdings in the future. The question of appointing qualified clerks in high and larger primary schools was not agreed to on the score of expense. The New South Wales Education Department recognises that the efficiency of the work in the high and intermediate high schools is impaired by constant removals and endeavours as far as possible to maintain the permanency of the staff. The recommendation from last conference, that the travelling expenses of two delegates from each State be pooled, has been agreed to. The New South Wales Education Department, though not agreeing wholly to the resolution as passed, regarding intelligence tests, had instituted a modified system of tests in lieu of examinations in the qualifying certificate. All students who wish to enter high schools, however, must still pass a written examination.

League of Nations.

Professor H. Darnley Naylor was welcomed as a deputation from the League of Nations Union. He spoke of ways in which school children could assist in promoting the aims of the league. He said they could join a juvenile organization known as the "Chum Movement," which aimed at the encouragement of interchange of correspondence by the children of different nations, and thereby developed the sentiments for which the League stood. The question of the mandated territories in the Pacific was one upon which the people of Australia needed further information. Very few of them knew anything about the government of those territories.

Professor Naylor answered a number of questions, and he was thanked for his address.

Registration Under Arbitration Act.

The question of procedure in the business of the conference was brought forward at the afternoon session. It was decided to deal with the question of the registration of teachers under the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. On the motion to go into committee for that purpose a number of delegates expressed the opinion that the press should be admitted, but others said they thought that, as they wished to discuss internal questions, the discussion should not be made public. By a large majority the meeting decided to admit the press to the discussion.

Mr. E. Dash, B.A. (New South Wales), in introducing the question, said that 90 per cent. of the teachers in Australia were in favour of arbitration. It was appropriate that the Minister of Education should have suggested that their questions and differences should be settled by conciliation. Some people argued that arbitration would lower the dignity of their

profession. In New South Wales, however, it had been found that the salaries, the dignity, and the status of the teachers had been raised by it. The offer of a tribunal should be placed under a microscope and be carefully examined so that the teachers could see that they were not going to have a tribunal of the Bayin type, as they had in New South Wales. The trouble was that the party in opposition to a Government to-day might, when they got into power, repeal the measure that had been granted. The position with the Commonwealth Court was quite different. Whether or not they had the right to be under that Court was a matter for the High Court to decide. Although the teachers' salaries in New South Wales were satisfactory, they had been told by representatives from other States that if they went into the Commonwealth Arbitration Court the tendency would be to bring them down to the level of those States. They were prepared, however, to take the risk for the sake of education, and to help their colleagues in the other States to a higher level. He hoped they would all put their weight in favour of the proposal for registration with the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

"Freedom to Develop the Best."

Mr. J. Waddle (Queensland) read an instructive paper on "The State and the Teacher—Their Mutual Obligation." He submitted that the safety of democracy lay in the hands of the common schools. Although the conditions of teaching in Queensland were far from ideal, they appeared to be ahead of those in South Australia. Why were teachers being imported into the latter State from England? Was it the necessity for new blood or because the service had failed to attract the proper class of young men? The former reason was regrettable, while the latter would be the outcome of poor conditions. A constant stream of intellectual youth must always be passing by the gateway of their profession, even if it were drawn into other callings subsequently. The State owed to the profession freedom to develop the best that was in the teachers for the advancement of the race. Ease of approach to the administration to set out the views of those on whom the success of State education depended, adequate equipment and training, a full measure of insurance against old-age poverty, and payment commensurate with the importance of their service to the community should be granted. Teachers were the grand optimists of the age, for, although their faith was sorely tried, did they not believe in the possibility of obtaining perfection of the race? If further evidence of their optimism was required it was to be found in the belief that, once the public appreciated the full significance of the teacher's place in the democratic Commonwealth, they would insist on him being recompensed on a scale more closely approximating to the value of his place in the nation. He, therefore, moved:—"That this conference instructs the executive committee of the Australian Teachers' Federation to watch over the interests of the separate associations of teachers in each State and, if requested, to assist any association of State teachers suffering disabilities in their representations for redress."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Grace (Tasmania) and adopted.

Entertaining the Delegates.

The conference delegates were entertained at dinner in the evening at Balfour's Cafe, by Sir Langdon Bonython, and afterwards were the guests of the South Australian Public Teachers' Union at a theatre party.

The sessions of the conference will be resumed this morning.

Personnel of the Conference.

The names of the delegates are as follows:—Queensland—Messrs. Isaac Waddle, M.Sc. (Principal State High School, Brisbane), and John Bensted (Supervisor, Primary Correspondence School, No. 1, Brisbane). New South Wales—Messrs. A. G. Alanson (President of the Australian Teachers' Federation) and W. J. Hendry (Secretary of the Federation). Miss Swann, and Messrs. E. Dash, B.A., E. J. Rourke, B.A., B.Sc., W. F. Harfield, B.A., B.Sc., and L. T. Latter, Victoria—Messrs. G. Robinson (President of the Victorian State School Teachers' Union), D. Black (Vice-President), and Henry Hart (Secretary). Messrs. Ingram and Edie, and Messrs. J. Hopton, B.A., and J. King (representing the Technical Schools' Association and the High Schools' Association respectively). South Australia—Messrs. William Bennett (President of the S.A. Public Teachers' Union), Miss Phebe N. Watson (Vice-President), Mr. E. J. Gartrell (President elect), Miss Adelaide Mielke (President of the Women Teachers' Progressive League), and Messrs. Edgar Allen, M.A., (representing the High School Male Teachers' Union) and Max Gerlach (Male Assistants' Association). Western Australia—Messrs. G. W. McLean (President State School Teachers' Union of W.A.) and A. D. Hill (President of the Country Teachers' Branch, W.A.). Tasmania—Messrs. H. L. Grace, B.A., and R. Lee.