

MODERN EFFICIENCY.

Is it a Fetish?

American Debaters' Success.

Extraordinary enthusiasm and interest were evinced in the debate on Saturday night between the representatives of Bates College, Lewiston, U.S.A., and the Adelaide University team. The subject was "That Efficiency Has Become a Deplorable Fetish in Modern Life." The Adelaideans spoke in the affirmative, and lost.

The debate took place in the Institute, North terrace, which was crowded, and many people were turned away. Sir Archibald Strong presided, and welcomed the visitors. He said the relations between the British and American universities had always been of the most friendly kind. Mr. J. F. Davis was studying law, Mr. M. L. Ames was preparing for a teaching course, and Mr. C. H. Guptill was studying journalism.

The Visitors.

The debate, viewed from the Americans' outlook, was an exemplification of most effective teamwork. The debating qualities exhibited were of a high order, and the platform appearance of the visitors suggested confidence. Eloquence, and clear reasoning, were interspersed with clever shafts of humour—obvious sometimes, but more often subtle. Mr. Davis, the leader, is the youngest of the party; but his clarity of utterance, his assurance, his absence of forced gesture, and his penetrating analysis of his opponent's arguments, made for favouritism with the audience. His reply was not so good as his opening speech, but it was a clever summing up. He cracked a new jest for Adelaide people. The bell having sounded for the termination of his first speech, he carried on, and then suddenly said, "Well, like Lady Godiva said as she drew near the end of her ride, 'I am drawing near my clo(ths)e.' The laughter which followed was irrepressible.

Mr. Ames, as one of his colleagues described him, has a "Calvinistic countenance." Somewhat older than his brethren, he is calm and deliberate. Hornrimmed spectacles set off his smoothly brushed hair, and, with a slow, drawling speech, he held the attention of the audience during the whole of his 15 minutes. He had a quip at the expense of Henry Ford. In opening, he declared—"The centre of the opposition seems to be directed against that very creditable American institution, Mr. Henry Ford. Our opponents ask us of what use is the Ford? I have driven a Ford, and sometimes have asked the same question. (Laughter.) We can give credit to him for one thing—he has made walking a definite pleasure." (Renewed laughter.)

"Unorganized Symphonies."

Mr. Guptill made short work of the Adelaideans' arguments, and with admirable logic brought forward many points in reply. Of resonant voice, not so slow as his colleagues', he wasted little time. He painted a vivid picture for his opponents of how they would be living were it not for the efficiency of modern civilization—life in caves, dressed in ferns ("pastoral robes" he called them), writing on stones, and "unorganized symphonies from kangaroos and emus." He was a most happy speaker.

The Adelaideans.

Of the Adelaide team, Mr. Pick was head and shoulders above his fellows. Assurance in plenty, logical argument, and apt allusions, gave him pride of place. Like the other two members of the trio, he prescribed the ambit of his discussion; although he sought to make amends for that in his reply, by saying that America was the greatest example of efficiency. His reply was a better one and more concise than Mr. Davis's.

Mr. F. W. Mitchell appeared to be nervous at the outset, but, warming to the discussion, he became more forceful. His arguments in some respects were backed up, and repetition militated against his speech.

Mr. S. H. Mayes made the mistake of beginning an almost entirely new line of argument, instead of summing up his brethren's remarks. His enthusiasm was most marked, and his gesture greatest of any of the six.

Efficiency—America's Ideal.

Mr. Pick, in opening, welcomed the visitors, and apologised for having to attack an American ideal. Efficiency itself could not be attacked—only that which was behind it. Efficiency meant doing something in the best possible manner, and in attacking it they were seeking that which was behind it—the fetish. The American ideal was money-making; in fact, that was the modern world's idea of success.

To accomplish that, man was compelled to concentrate on money-making, and abandon some of the best things in life. The modern manufacturer, in seeking efficiency by means of mass production and standardization, was destroying interest and beauty for the worker, in his work and in life. For his relaxation the worker spent his time in idle pleasures, such as the cinema and novels. Never before had there been so little leisure. Unfortunately, there was no other country so much in the grip of the manufacturers as America, where public policy was directed by them. Wealth did not make morality. They condemned efficiency because it made for the destruction of beauty in life.

Mr. Davis opened by saying that he had heard that Sydney was the place for pleasure, Melbourne for business, and Adelaide for culture. Sydney had showed them their harbour, Melbourne had not (laughter), and Adelaide had displayed her parks and railway station. He thought the station a beautiful building, and there was a beautiful ideal behind it—efficiency. He reminded his opponents that efficiency was the subject of the debate, and not money making, and that, in his opinion, they had narrowed their definition by applying efficiency only to manufactures. They could have efficiency in tying bowties, in converting the heathen, and in debate, and then they would know whether a quotation was made by St. Paul or some one else (a clever reply to a misquotation made by Mr. Pick). He pointed out that if it were not for the present industrial efficiency, with its facile transportation and large-scale production, we could not have our large cities. At no time in history had the workman had a better time—there were shorter hours, lighter work, and more pay. Efficiency in the research laboratories had added 10 years to the expectation of life. He realized that his arguments were materialistic and opposed to the idealism of his opponents, but they had to be, because 75 per cent. of the people of the world were interested in bodily comfort. With efficiency there were more opportunities for culture.

Mr. Mitchell stressed that standardization had made for monotony, resulting in the deadening of intellect and the impoverishment of the workers' body. Bigger business and greater profits were the mainsprings of modern industrial efficiency. Unfortunately, the desire for efficiency had spread to the schools, and examinations were an evidence, with a resultant increase in homework. Efficiency meant the complete subservience of man's mental, moral, and physical ability.

Culture Universal.

Mr. Ames referred to the gloomy nature of his opponents' arguments, and said Americans must be shuddering in their plight! Efficiency could not be such a fetish if it induced the growth of philanthropy and Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. movements. Efficiency had made culture universal.

Mr. Moyes contended that the world was in chaos as the result of efficiency, and that the present unemployment was the result of the worship of machinery. The pace of modern life had been inspired by efficiency, and widespread neurasthenia was the result.

Mr. Guptill said there was probably more culture prevalent throughout the world than ever before, because efficiency had made the culture of previous ages ours. They might as well try to retard the force of gravity as try to retard the progress of efficiency.

Messrs. Davis and Pick replied. The judges (Messrs. H. Thomson, A. S. Pickering and M. C. Kriewaldt) were unanimous in their verdict.

ADV. 30. 7. 28

EFFICIENCY AS A FETISH.

INTER-UNIVERSITY DEBATE.

WON BY BATES COLLEGE.

By the unanimous vote of the judges the Bates College (U.S.A.) debating team was adjudged the winner in its first meeting with the Adelaide University team at the Institute lecture-hall, North-terrace, on Saturday evening. "That Efficiency is a Deplorable Fetish in Modern Life" was the subject of the debate, the affirmative being taken by Adelaide. There was a crowded attendance, which was kept amused by the sallies of the speakers, the remarks of the visitors at times causing roars of laughter. The teams were:—Adelaide, Messrs. S. Pick (leader), F. W. Mitchell, and S. H. Mayes; Bates College, Messrs. C. H. Guptill (leader), M. L. Ames, and J. F. Davis. Professor Sir Archibald Strong was in the chair, and the judges were Messrs. H. Thomson, A. S. Pickering, and M. C. Kriewaldt.

Sir Archibald Strong, in welcoming the visitors and introducing them to the audience, said the relations between British and American universities had always been of the happiest kind. The representatives of Bates College were on a tour of the Empire, and had yet to visit South Africa and Britain. They had established a reputation in the eastern States, both as brilliant debaters and good fellows, and he had much pleasure on behalf of the University in welcoming them to Adelaide. (Applause.)

Mr. Pick, in opening for the affirmative, pointed out that they were not attacking efficiency itself, as after all it was only a means to an end, but the fetish which lay behind it. The ideal of modern life was money-making. By its concentration on money-making the modern world had gone astray, and was bowing down before a false idol. It was possible to concentrate on means so much that serious sacrifices had to be made, entailing the loss of far more important things. That was what the modern world was doing in its insane worship of efficiency. Success nowadays depended upon making a fortune. People were concentrating on money-making, and to do that they had to abandon the best things in life. The modern method of mass production had destroyed all initiative in workmen. Wealth was not an end to be sought for itself, but was rather the means to an end, and that was what manufacturers who were striving for efficiency only had overlooked. One result of the worship of the fetish of efficiency was an ever-increasing superficiality of outlook. That was proved by the way some people imagined that they could deal with the problems of life in the same way as Ford cars were manufactured. (Laughter.) Their great quarrel with the worshippers of the fetish of efficiency was because of its blighting effect on the artistic point of view. It was because of its destruction of beauty that they condemned it.

Mr. Davis, who opened for the visiting team, said a fetish was something which was worshipped abjectly for something which it did not possess. In all fetishes there were two common parts:—(1) They were abjectly worshipped; (2) they were ineffective in bringing about results. The question they were debating was that efficiency was a deplorable fetish in modern life. They should enquire whether efficiency was abjectly worshipped and whether it was ineffective in bringing about results. Large scale production was the only way of bringing about results in modern life, and that was only possible as a result of the efficiency of modern manufacture and transportation. Large scale manufacturing had made possible to working men to-day, luxuries which could not have been purchased with a king's ransom in the olden times. It had given them shorter hours and more pay, and had put into their hands possibilities of improving themselves as regarded art, music, and culture that they had never before possessed. It was the efficiency in modern research laboratories that had made possible the greater probability of life to-day compared with that of their grandfathers. Efficiency in business was ensuring bodily comfort, and so was making 75 per cent. of humanity happy. He admitted that there were men in the Ford factories who did nothing else but stand and turn a screw all day long, but they were only a small proportion of the population. If they had a better mentality they would not have to do that; they would be employed in some more interesting work. The modern industrial world—a direct result of efficiency—had given man the time to enjoy his leisure, before, during, and after his work. That brought them to the point that it was impossible to have culture without leisure. Efficiency had produced results; therefore it could not be classed as a fetish, but rather as one of the greatest benefits of modern life.

Mr. Mitchell said a fetish was only called a fetish when the results produced were not in the best interests of the community. Efficiency became a fetish when it was worshipped, and its results were not good. They must consider the ideals and motives behind modern efficiency to see whether it was a good thing or not. A deplorable aspect of modern efficiency was that it tended towards specialisation, and if that particular job should be no longer required the man was out of work. Under the system of mass production workmen were no longer so versatile as in the past, and it also had a stultifying effect on the mind of the worker. Modern industrial efficiency demanded all a man's time. He had to employ his spare time in studying to fit himself for what might be expected of him. The ideals behind modern business efficiency were greater profits and greater results. In that fetish they saw the germ of most of their modern industrial dangers.

Mr. Ames contended that certain things which one did every day, such as walking, had, fortunately, become automatic, and just as one could think while walking, so could the man who was turning a screw all day think of other things while he was turning the screw, if he so desired. At any rate, the efficiency of the modern Ford car, which had been quoted so much that evening, had made walking itself a luxury in the United States. (Laughter.) It was not their ambition to turn out scholars by mass production methods. In America to-day probably more attention was being given to the individual as a separate entity than had been given in the past. The trend to-day was towards

pure culture. It had been argued that literature and art were declining in this efficient age, but could their opponents name any other period in the history of the world which was preferable to the present, or in which the ordinary man had such opportunities for culture? Modern culture was democratic, and was designed for the masses, not for the few.

Mr. Mayes said the civilised world to-day was in a chaotic condition, and that was largely due to the worship of efficiency and machinery. Modern civilisation, inspired by the worship of efficiency, had not brought in its train what it should have done. The face of modern life was a direct produce of modern industrialism, inspired by efficiency, which had become a fetish. When that happened, efficiency ceased to be effective.

Mr. Guptill said the fundamental weakness of the case for the affirmative was that it had not proved that efficiency to-day was out of its place. Efficiency had made Shakespeare a household work in the United States. There was probably more culture throughout the world to-day than ever there was. Beauty had not gone out of manufacture to-day, as was seen in the modern motor car, compared with that of ten years ago. Was the lot of the working man to-day, who was employed on a routine job, worse than that of his prototype in other ages? He thought their opponents would not seriously contend that it was. What they wanted to-day was not less but more efficiency. Those who were trying to retard the progress of efficiency as a factor in the world had no more chance than if they were trying to stop the operation of the law of gravity.

After both leaders had summarised the arguments used by their teams, Sir Archibald Strong announced that the judges had unanimously given their award for Bates College, a result which was received with applause.

NEWS 30. 7. 28

FORESTRY CONFERENCE

Visiting Delegates Arriving

Mr. R. L. Robinson, O.B.E., B.A., B.Sc. (British Forestry Commissioner), who will be a member of the Empire Forestry Conference, to be held in Adelaide from Thursday, September 27, to Monday, October 1, and Mr. A. Rule (Australian secretary to the conference) will arrive in Adelaide on Wednesday or on Thursday next week. The following Tuesday they will leave for Perth and await the arrival of other delegates from South Africa on August 19, from Great Britain and India on August 21, and from Canada on August 22.

The programme in Western Australia will extend over three days from August 22. On August 25 the delegates will leave for Adelaide, arriving on Tuesday, August 28.

The South Australian programme has not been finalised, but it will include inspections of the University Waite Agricultural Research Institute, Botanical Gardens, a display of forest products to be held in the Exhibition Building, and visits to various places in the hills, including the home of Mr. T. Barr Smith at Aldgate. In addition the Kuitpo Forest will be visited, and the three State reserves in the South-East—Mount Burr, Penola, and Mount Gambier.

At the conclusion of the South Australian visit the delegates will go to Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, and Queensland. At the conclusion of the conference at Canberra in October 1, the delegates will leave for New Zealand, where they will remain until October 22, when they will depart for their various destinations.

REG. 30. 7. 28

ANGAS ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIP.

The Council of the University of Adelaide has decided to make no award of the Angas Engineering Scholarship for 1928. The scholarship will be offered next year. It is of the annual value of £200 for two years, with an allowance of £100 for travelling expenses. The award is made on a comparison of the academic records of the candidates and also on the merits of an original thesis, design, or investigation. The scholar is required to proceed to the United Kingdom for further engineering experience, and with special permission may spend the whole or part of his time in study or practical training outside the United Kingdom.

REG. 30. 7. 28

The Council of the University has accepted with regret the resignation of Dr. A. C. Garnett, evening lecturer in logic. Dr. Garnett will proceed early in August to the United States, where he has accepted an appointment at the Butler University, Indianapolis.