

EDUCATION OUTLAYS

"POLICY OF DESPAIR" DEPRECATED

To the Editor

Sir—No thoughtful citizen of South Australia can stand aside unprotesting while a policy of despair is under discussion. The educational policy in this State has, for many years, aimed at the ideal of completely free education. The new proposals are wholly at variance with those aims. To plead financial inability is preposterous and immoral. It has been said by a professor of the Adelaide University "that the final justification for the existence of universities is the belief in the ultimate triumph of 'the powers of the mind.'" Surely the same justification holds good for State primary and secondary education.

Considered upon the basis of present day conditions the proposals are reprehensible. Each year about 5,000 boys pass the qualifying examination in this State. For the past three years only a mere sprinkling of these youths have found employment on leaving school; some of the remainder have been able to continue their education chiefly owing to their parents being able to meet the cost of books, tram fares, &c; a further impost would be prohibitive for most of these. The rest will probably soon forget that which they learned, and will become unemployable by the time they are 21. Under the new dispensation the number of unemployables would be materially increased. These facts are a cogent argument, not for curtailing expenditure upon education, but for extending it in the worthy hope of moulding this potential human worth into a more cultured type of citizen than those with which we have been blessed in the past.

The proposed closing of many small country schools and the extension of the correspondence system may result in some monetary saving, but it is questionable whether this saving is justified. In many small centres it is the school that forms the central pivot for the social life of the district, and it is conceivable that the closing of the school may impair the happiness of the adult population to an extent difficult to express in monetary terms. The charging of fees for technical and high school training will permanently shut out all opportunity for the children of working class families to enter the professions. The germs of a new "caste" system are inherent in this legislation. Taking the matter broadly, we have built our social structure on the foundation of democratic government, the better educated the democracy the better the government. To deny the privilege of education to the people, or to impair their means of obtaining it, is ultimately to stultify the government. From this aspect of the matter, we must see that it is not less, but more and more education that is needed.—I am, Sir, &c.,

C. E. SKITCH, Cumberland.

RIGHTS OF COUNTRY CHILDREN

Sir—In 1920 the cost of education was less than in 1931, because salaries paid to teachers were considerably lower. This year the cost per child will be less than in 1930, due to exorbitant taxation and reduction of salaries. The financial chaos has not been caused by the cost of education, but maladministration. Any attempt to curtail the expenditure will impair the efficiency of our education system and lower the mental and moral standard of our community.

The annual grant of £61,000 to the University of Adelaide, and £23,000 to the School of Mines, should be abolished before any proposals which will involve hardships on country children are accepted. If our high schools cost £104,000 a year, what is that compared with the waste in other Government departments? Surely the country children are entitled to every facility that our education system provides. Their parents contribute towards the upkeep of the schools, and should not be deprived of the privilege of educating their children. The education of our children would not cost so much if the financial experts would solve the problem of unemployment, which is costing the State £25,000 a week. Those who have at heart the welfare of our rising generation should not forget that any temporary financial advantage that could be gained by proposals now before the Government, would be necessarily small and the retribution great.—I am, Sir, &c.,

F. DASHWOOD BLADON, Keswick.

£170,000 COULD BE SAVED

Premier on Savings in Education

THAT it would be possible to effect economies of £170,000 in the Education Department without seriously disturbing the department or impairing its efficiency, was stated by the Hon. L. L. Hill (Premier) in the Assembly today.

Mr. Nicholls had asked him if, in view of the impression gained by some people that the Government or Parliament would shortly deal with the report of the Education Committee, whether the Premier would say what his intentions were with regard to the recommendations contained in that report.

Mr. Hill asked for notice of the question. As far as the Budget was concerned, he said, the Education Department had made careful investigations, and he had been informed now that it would be possible to save £170,000.

CUTS IN EDUCATION

Recommendations Opposed In Country

Kapunda, July 21.

A strong protest against the recommendations of the Royal Commission on expenditure on education, as regards country schools, was made at a public meeting at the Soldiers' Memorial Hall.

The Mayor of Kapunda presided, and those present included the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Butler), Messrs. Pascoe, M.L.C., Cameron, and Dennison, M.P.'s.

A motion was carried, pointing out that while the report of the Commission left the huge expenditure in the metropolitan area practically untouched, it aimed to deal a heavy blow at country schools generally, and deprive many small rural communities of education facilities.

With the object of decreasing expenditure, the meeting suggested that the grant to the University (£63,000) be reduced; that the Training College be abolished, and students, at least temporarily, and teachers pay their own fees at the University; that greater discrimination be exercised in granting travelling allowances to students; that the High School course be modified and the staff reduced; that temporary reductions be made in teachers' salaries, particularly of those unmarried women without responsibilities; that a big reduction be made in the vote to the School of Mines, and that over-lapping of subjects taught in technical schools and some high schools and central schools be eliminated; that the expenditure on supervisors of children's playgrounds be reduced; that the three practising schools in the city be eliminated.

Closing of Country High Schools

From "Teacher":—The closing of some of the country high schools would certainly have a bad result for the State. Country children, who otherwise would have no chances, are now able to secure a good secondary education, with moral training, and to learn sport from a country high school. These factors mean much in the building of sound citizenship. Possibly teachers who are "franked" for university examinations would prefer to pay examination fees, than that the high schools should be attacked. Knowing the great value of the country high school to the country child, I, personally, would prefer this.