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# EDUCATION POLICY OF GOVERNMENT

## Economies And Changes To Yield £62,300 A Year

### HIGH SCHOOL FEES TO BE INTRODUCED

## £25,000 Reduction In Teachers' Salaries

The Minister of Education (Mr. Jeffries) announced details of the Government's education policy yesterday. He said that the Government had approved recommendations providing for the introduction of fees (not exceeding £9 a year) for high school education, for reductions in teachers' salaries designed to save £25,000 a year, for reduced high school staffs, for changes at the Teachers' College, and for reductions in education costs, including travelling allowances for school children.

The Government's proposals for a full year would result in a reduction in education expenditure of £45,300, and an increase of £17,000 in revenue, or a total improvement of approximately £62,300, he said. For this financial year the reduction in expenditure would be approximately £38,000, and the increase in revenue approximately £5,700, or a total benefit of £43,700.

Mr. Jeffries said that, in view of the fact that there might be some misunderstanding in the minds of the public, he desired, on behalf of the Government, to make a full and complete statement setting out the economies to be effected in the Education Department, showing what they were and the reasons for them.

"In the first place," he added, "I desire to express my appreciation of the assistance the Government has received from the Director of Education (Mr. Adey), who, although desiring to do nothing that would impair the efficiency of his department, had been able to suggest avenues where definite economies could be made."

Mr. Jeffries said that the following recommendations made by the Director of Education had been approved by the Government:—

#### 1. Travelling Allowances

Regulation VIII. provides for the payment of conveyance allowances of from 4d. to 6d. a day to all children attending public schools whose homes are so situated that they have to travel more than three miles each way to school, and also provides for the issue of free railway concession tickets to those who are able to avail themselves of the railways' services. These concessions are granted to all children whose homes are beyond the metropolitan area, and who fulfil the conditions mentioned above. This regulation was enacted in 1920 and 1928, and as the privileges became known the costs have amounted with alarming rapidity. The following table shows the growth:—

1918	£347
1922	£1,042
1928	£4,172
1930	Primary £9,372
	Secondary £3,744
	£13,116
1932	Primary £11,101
	Secondary £3,799
	£14,900

The Government proposes to amend the regulation as under:—

- That the distance before any allowance is paid be increased from three miles to five miles, according to age.
- That allowances be not paid for more than a limited number of children in each family, say, two, except where travelling in a public conveyance.
- That the conveyance must be either horse-driven or motor driven, and should not include bicycles.
- That parents should show, by filling in the appropriate form, that they are not able, for financial reasons, to pay for the conveyance of their own children.

Mr. Jeffries said it was estimated that, by an amendment of this regulation along the lines suggested, a saving for the full year (that is, in the future), would amount to £9,000, while the saving this financial year would be approximately £3,500.

#### 2. High School Staffing

"A representative committee has been revising the high school syllabus with a view to its simplification, and by reducing the number of subjects taught and requiring special teachers to teach ordinary subjects," said Mr. Jeffries. "The schools would thus be able to carry on with a reduced staff. By this means it is anticipated that the high school staffs can be reduced by 15 to 20 teachers, with an approximate saving of between £4,000 and £5,000. In justice to those who are proceeding with their present studies, it is proposed to introduce this scheme in January next. This economy will

result in a saving of £4,000 a year in the future, and £2,130 for the remaining portion of this financial year.

#### 3. Staffing Of Class VII. Schools

"Regulation XX. provides for certificated salaries to be paid to certificated teachers in charge of Class VII. schools for two years. These teachers receive the first two years' salaries which would be payable to them if they were in charge of Class VI. schools.

"It is proposed that, in future, all new appointments to Class VII. schools from the ranks of the trainees at the Teachers' College should be at the rates of salaries provided for in regulation for uncertificated teachers, and any necessary alterations to the regulation be made accordingly.

"There are at present about 110 such cases, and these could be appointed to certificated positions as vacancies arose and their places taken at uncertificated rates. Moreover, if the present system is continued, the number of such teachers in Class VII. schools is likely to increase, and by January next the approximate number would be 150. If put into operation early, the majority, if not all, of such cases could be dealt with within 12 months, and a saving at the rate of £5,000 a year would be accomplished. The saving for a full year will be £5,000 a year, but it is difficult to estimate at present what the actual saving will be this financial year.

#### 4. Transfers

"Regulation XVIII. Part 2 of this regulation states:—'Any teacher, who, after not less than five years' satisfactory service in a position is transferred at his own request, may be granted removal expenses at the following rates, viz.:—Half expenses for five years' tenure; full expenses for ten years' tenure, and a proportional amount for six, seven, eight or nine years' tenure.'

"It is proposed that this clause should be suspended for 12 months. This would not only save the expenses mentioned above, but also expenses consequent on these transfers. It is anticipated that if this clause is suspended the number of transfers would be considerably reduced in such cases, together with transfers consequent upon the original removals. The approximate saving thereby would be £300 a year.

#### 5. Teachers' College

"The cost of this institution during the past four years has been reduced from £55,618 to £12,440. It is realised that the number of students in training has been reduced far below the normal needs of the department, but during the years of financial stress the number of resignations diminished by more than half, with the result that those in the course of training were

far in excess of the needs of the department, and it is almost certain that within two years there will be a shortage of teachers again.

"The Director of Education, however, is prepared to meet this difficulty when it arrives, and further to reduce the number it was intended to enrol in January next. This would effect a saving of approximately £2,000 a year as from January next.

"In addition to these economies, the Government was strongly of the opinion that, in view of the financial position of the State, some further reduction in education expenditure would have to be made, and after a most exhaustive investigation, it has decided to make a further reduction of £25,000 in all teachers' salaries.

"The Government is convinced that, after making a comparison of the salaries paid to teachers and public servants, this reduction is justified.

"A table has been compiled on a uniform basis, which shows the salaries paid to teachers and public servants. The information given in the table has been confirmed by the Director of Education as regards education salaries, and the Public Service Commissioner (Mr. Hunkin), as regards public service salaries. It is as follows:—

TEACHERS						
Year.	Full Time.	Total Salary.	Average Salary.	Per cent. Reduction Total Salary.	Average Salary.	
1929-30	2,644	£711,840	£269			
1933-34	2,746	£631,964	£230	11.22	14.53	

PUBLIC SERVANTS						
Year.	Full Time.	Total Salary.	Average Salary.	Per cent. Reduction Total Salary.	Average Salary.	
1929-30	2,029	£738,193	£363			
1933-34	2,063	£575,000	£278	22.1	21.3	

"It should be noted in comparing the average salaries that a large proportion of the teachers are women."

The Minister said that in the estimates of expenditure which had been presented to the Treasury, teachers' salaries showed an increase of approximately £9,500 over the expenditure of last year, and after reducing the amount for salaries by the £25,000 now proposed the net reductions in salaries this year would be £15,500, or approximately 2½ per cent. on the original estimate of salaries of £631,964.

Mr. Jeffries said that he desired to say that, in view of these facts, the Government had asked the teachers voluntarily to agree to the reduction above stated, and thus avoid the necessity of the Government taking legislative action. He felt sure that the teachers of the department did appreciate the difficulties in which the Government found itself, and would assist the State in its grave financial problem. He recognised that teachers had special duties to perform, and fully appreciated the services they rendered to the State.

Referring to the revenue estimates of the Education Department, Mr. Jeffries said the Director of Education had advised the Government that additional revenue could be obtained by making a charge for woodwork material, and for advertisements on school books.

#### High School Fees

One of the most important parts of the Government's policy so far as education was concerned, was its decision to make a charge not exceeding £9 a year for higher education, said Mr. Jeffries. The full fees would apply only to the parents of children who could afford to pay; but those parents who could show that they were not in a position to pay the full amount would be asked to pay only according to their circumstances. Parents in poor financial circumstances would be exempt from the payment of fees altogether. In this way it was felt that no hardship would be inflicted upon anyone.

"While the Government insist that those who can afford to pay should pay," said Mr. Jeffries, "it is particularly desirous that no boy or girl shall be forced into idleness during these times when employment for our youths is difficult to obtain. All these factors will certainly be taken into consideration."

The Minister added that the cost of high school education per student today was £17 4/1. It would therefore be seen that the Government was only asking those parents whose circumstances warranted it to contribute practically half of what it was costing the Government to educate their children.

It would also be noted that the Government's policy would not affect the rights of every child, whether he lived in the city or the country, to free primary education, nor would it lead to a dismissal of staff, so undesirable and uneconomic in these times.

The Government fully realised its proposals would meet with some criticism, but he asked the people to view them in the light of present day circumstances. Unpopular some of the proposals might be, and as much as the Government regretted and disliked having to give effect to them, all members of the Cabinet realised that they would be falling in their duties, and would be unfit for the responsible positions they held, if they refrained from carrying out the policy which they believed was right and in the best interests of this State.

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### COST OF EDUCATION

It may confidently be said that nothing has given the Butler Government greater concern than the education vote, which, after the most mature consideration, it has decided to reduce to more manageable proportions, by means which will effect savings of £43,700 in the current financial year, and £62,300 in the full year following. As may be gathered from the Minister's frank and informative statement, the Government is perfectly well aware of the unpopular nature of some of its proposals. The Ministry had to choose between the line of least resistance, and a course of conduct that was bound to evoke adverse criticism; and it is encouraging to learn (quite apart from the merits of the question at issue) that it has reached a decision obviously dictated by unselfish considerations. As Mr. Cudmore, M.L.C., told a recent meeting of school committees at Norwood, "it is nineteen years since the State balanced its Budget; and, unless it now pays its way, there will be no free education, or anything else... It is more important that the boys should have a job, than that they should have secondary education." In a nutshell, this doubtless represents the logical basis upon which the Government's amended education policy stands. The cost of South Australia's public school system, growing at a prodigious rate during the post-war boom, at last reached a dizzy peak that was utterly beyond the State's financial capacity; and although, since the record year of 1929-30, this prodigal rate of expenditure has been drastically reduced, even the further diminished total estimated for the current year means a dangerously heavy drain upon our resources. In these circumstances, it is idle to wax sentimental about the birthright of the rising generation, as though the hereditary privileges of young Australia were all comprehended in the mysteries of a free education. For our immediate posterity, nothing is more important than the maintenance of the solvency of the State; and from a practical point of view, therefore, another £62,000 off the education vote is unquestionably a step in the right direction.

Well-intentioned educationists who are disposed to be eloquent about the inalienable rights of the citizens of tomorrow, are equally apt to forget, not only that the citizens of today are in straitened circumstances, but that the citizens of yesterday, who, educationally speaking, had no inalienable rights worth mentioning, made a conspicuous success of the work of colonising this country, and laid the foundations upon which the whole of the present elaborate superstructure has been reared. The prevailing system of free education, even if it were made less than half as liberal as it is, would still excite the incredulous admiration of the generation to whose achievements all the refinements of our polite society are primarily due. The reforms to be instituted by the Butler Government, are not calculated to modify the education system in any material particular; but, even if the whole of the State school plan were so remodelled as to lay rather less emphasis on a supposed universal aspiration for exalted scholarship, the results would not necessarily be calamitous. These, however, are speculative considerations. In effect, all that Mr. Butler and his Ministers propose, is to reduce the demands made by education upon the general taxpayer. Teachers' salaries will be further reduced—a particularly unwelcome necessity, having regard to their relatively low level, and to the high even-