

"POVERTY IDEAS EXAGGERATED"

'Varsity Secretary on Flying Visit

"NOT BADLY OFF"

MELBOURNE, Wednesday. OUR ideas of poverty, at least so far as they concern university finance and equipment, seem an exaggeration to the secretary of University College, London (Mr. Charles Douie), who is visiting universities in the British Empire which have received endowments from the Carnegie Foundation.

He said today that as an administrative officer whose position would correspond with that of registrar in an Australian university he was interested in the problems of finance.

It had been difficult for some of the officials of the Carnegie Foundation, who were Americans and were not used to finding universities short of funds in their own country, to appreciate the position in British countries. While not acting as a direct representative of the foundation, he would report on the information gained during his tour.

NOT BADLY OFF HERE

"By comparison, Australian universities are not so badly off," said Mr. Douie. "University College gets about £35,000 a year in endowments, which is much less than the amount received by some of your institutions. Sydney has 130 acres of grounds; we are situated in the heart of London, near the British Museum, in Bloomsbury, with only nine acres for an institution that has 3,000 students enrolled."

It was approximately true to say that one-third of an English university's revenue came from fees, one-third from endowments, and one-third from the Government grant. Since the war his own university had received one and a half million pounds from the Rockefeller Institute.

Outpacing all benefactions, however, was the costly stride of science, which rendered equipment obsolete soon after it was installed. Keeping its medical and scientific departments up to date was a university's greatest financial problem.

Mr. Douie's trip is literally a round of flying visits. He crossed the United States by plane, visited New Zealand, flew from Sydney to Brisbane, and will take to the air again when he leaves for Perth.

He is due back in London on December 26—after five months' absence.

Adv. 20-10-32

DENTAL LEGISLATION

Opposition To Bill Before Parliament

HOW PUBLIC IS AFFECTED

(Published by Arrangement with the South Australian Branch of the Australian Dental Association)

In October, 1930, Mr. H. Tassie introduced a private Bill before the Legislative Council to amend the existing Dental Act. The object of this measure was to enable a select number of operative dental assistants to be admitted to the register as dentists, without fulfilling the educational and practical requirements which, in the interests of the public, were considered essential by our legislators 28 years ago.

This unwise privilege was extended to some 50 operative assistants in 1917, when the Dental Act was amended to clear up a possible misunderstanding concerning the status of dental assistants, and in order to limit the number of such assistants that might be employed by one dentist. All except one (1) of these operative assistants were registered as dentists, and comprise 20 per cent. of the present number of dental practitioners in South Australia.

Following the 1917 amendment it has always been perfectly clear—

(1) That a dentist may employ two operative assistants, who may perform dental operations under their employer's supervision (the employer being responsible, of course, for the actions of his assistant); and

(2) That any person desiring to be registered as a dentist must successfully undertake a specified course of practical and theoretical training before being accorded such privileges and responsibilities.

In an attempt to justify their claims those operative assistants, who were sponsoring the proposed 1930 amendment, endeavored to hold up the 1917 amendment as a precedent, although conditions in 1930 were totally dif-

ferent. However, despite strenuous opposition from all responsible medical, dental, and educational bodies (including the University, the British Medical Association, the Australian Dental Association and the Dental Board) the political influence of the operative assistants forced the members of the dental profession to accede to their requests; and, at the suggestion of the Chief Secretary, a new Dental Act was prepared by the solicitor of the Dental Board, and was assented to on the 2nd December, 1931. This Act—The Dentists Act, 1931—embodied every concession asked for by the operative assistants in the amendment which they had prepared in 1930; in fact the concessions are greater, as they are extended to operative assistants with only six (6) years' practical experience instead of seven (as requested in 1930), and the vive voce examination is omitted.

Concessions extended in the 1931 Dental Act to operative assistants of 6 years standing are as follows:—

1. Exemption from any preliminary educational qualifications.
2. Exemption from any apprenticeship.
3. Exemption from attendance at all lectures, clinics, and practical demonstrations.
4. Exemption from all theoretical examinations.
5. Exemption from vive voce examinations.
6. The right to be registered as a dentist if they pass a practical examination in operative and prosthetic (mechanical) dentistry, within two years of the time when the Act was passed.
7. Three opportunities to endeavor to pass this practical examination.
8. If unsuccessful in all three attempts then the privilege at any time within the next 10 years of doing the Dental Board course (this is not the B.D.S. course of the University of Adelaide, but a much simpler and shorter course) without having to matriculate and without having to serve a four years' apprenticeship, as is required of bona fide dental students.
9. Should the unsuccessful candidate not desire to undertake the modified board course, he does not (as suggested in the 1930 amendment, which was prepared by the assistants themselves) lose his right to work as an operative assistant; but is licensed as such, and may continue to work in this capacity indefinitely.

(The operative assistants' register is now closed and no further licences will ever be granted.)

Although medical and dental organizations are in no way reconciled to the very unjust and unwise privileges extended to the operative assistants, it was thought that the public and profession would be spared any further indignities of this nature.

Such a possibility has, unfortunately, arisen, and must be viewed from several aspects.

1. That of the public. Surely it must be evident to legislators that the public is entitled to be protected from any further lowering of the standard of proficiency demanded of those to be registered as dental practitioners; and to whom the eminent Dr. Charles Mayo says, the world looks for "the next great forward step in preventive medicine."

There is a very grave risk involved in permitting an assistant (even though competent as a technician) to assume the responsibilities of his master—the helmsman may not be a reliable navigator, and would never be entrusted with directing the course of a vessel until he had adequately fulfilled the requirements that would indicate his competence to undertake such a responsibility.

2. That of the dental students. From the standpoint of bona fide students the whole matter is ludicrously unjust and unreasonable. If legislators continually sanction flouting of the educational standards there will be no incentive for students to undertake, at considerable cost in time and money (although the Dental Board course may be successfully undertaken while a candidate is earning his living) the prescribed course of training.

They will logically conclude that such training is not actually necessary, and so will naturally take the apparently easy "back door" entrance into the profession; and it is unfortunately not the Dental School, but the public of this State that will suffer in consequence.

3. That of the operative assistants. From an operative assistant's viewpoint no further concessions are in any way called for, even if he does not pass in either of the three examinations provided for in the 1931 Act, he will not have suffered in any way, for

(1) His status is better now than it was prior to 1931; he is now definitely licensed (for as long as he wishes) as an assistant, and as no further licences are to be granted he has an assured and permanent standing in the profession.

(2) None of the privileges that he has ever enjoyed are taken from him.

(3) He has received the privilege of being registered as a dentist upon passing a considerably modified examination, when actually he has not been suffering any hardship or injustice

which entitled him to such a concession, or to any special consideration whatsoever.

In all enlightened countries the standard of dental education is being raised not lowered, and if the public was cognizant of the manner in which certain of our legislators have championed the cause of the "not going to bother to qualify" operative assistants, there would undoubtedly be a widespread movement of indignation.

(4) He has known ever since undertaking his work as an assistant that it would be necessary for him to undergo a specified course of training if he wished to become a registered dentist.

4. That of the members of the dental profession.

As far as members are concerned personally, the measure proposed by our ill-advised legislators is of very little consequence—trained men have nothing to fear from untrained men in any specialised vocation; but members do feel that the matter is potentially a very serious one from the point of view of the public, and a grossly unjust and unwise one from the standpoint of dental students.

Yesterday, Mr. Tassie (who, on every occasion except one, has supported and encouraged the operative assistants in their doubtful endeavors) introduced an amendment to the Dental Act, and it is unfortunately obvious that further violation of the examination standard is contemplated.

In accordance with the Dentists Act, 1931, the first of the three modified examinations for operative assistants was held at the Dental Hospital during May of this year. The examiners appointed were those who customarily examine the dental students at that institution. The examination was of a strictly practical nature, and two of the 21 candidates were successful. Considering that the standard demanded was the same as that required of students who have undertaken the orthodox course of instruction, this (for the first attempt) was a surprisingly good result; but apparently the 19 unsuccessful candidates, who still have two more opportunities to reach the required state of practical proficiency, anticipated that the "farical standard of the 1917 modified examination" would obtain in 1932 (15 years later), and they consider that they have been unjustly treated, despite the almost inconceivably lenient concessions which still exist even if they fail at the two subsequent examinations.

When the question of a practical examination was discussed in the Legislative Council the "farical examination of 1917" was mentioned, and the Mr. H. Tassie himself assured members that the examination for the present batch of candidates would not be farical, and that it was the fault of the Dental Board—not of the operative assistants, that the 1917 tests had been so hopelessly inadequate.

Then again, the operative assistants themselves, as well as their various supporters, all stressed the fact that there was no danger to the public the 1930 amendment became law, as no assistant would become registered unless he gave sufficient evidence of his practical ability in the examination.

Extract from Hansard, 22nd October, 1930, p. 1535.—Mr. H. Tassie especially drew the attention of legislators to the fact that "the practical examination has to be exactly the same (as that) which has to be undertaken by any student of the Dental College, or anyone else who desires to be registered as a dentist. The only thing that they are not to be subjected to is a theoretical examination."

Unless an assurance, such as the above, had been given to legislators, it is certain they would never have assented to the 1931 Dental Act.

The operative assistants, however, are clamoring for a lower examination standard, and now contend that the examination was only intended to be a formal farical business as in 1917; and further, they now demand to be registered as dentists without any examination whatsoever. This is an appalling situation.

How is it that they are complaining even before having completed the three attempts, which they themselves felt might be necessary?

The present move is a perfectly clear indication that these men are actuated only by a desire to force themselves into an honorable profession.

News 20-10-32

DR. R. S. Rogers and Mr. W. H. Langham were reappointed as Government nominees to the board of governors of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery in Executive Council today.

DENTAL ASSISTANTS QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS

To the Editor
Sir—The public should be warned of the meaning of the proposed amendment to the Dentists Act, now before Parliament. Under the Act an examination is provided for operative assistants of seven years standing. They are permitted to sit for three examinations up till the year 1941. At the first examination, many failed. These unsuccessful candidates are now petitioning for an amendment, which, in the main, provides for the registration as dentists of such operative assistants without any examination at all. The students who are graduating through the proper channel—the University course—feel that it would be iniquitous if unqualified men should be registered as members of the dental profession and thereby allowed to practise. The University course for dental students provides for a period of five years' intensive training, and they have to satisfy the same examiners, not only in practical work of a higher standard, but also in theoretical papers, in which essential of dentistry the operative assistants are not required to present themselves for examination. The dental students are shortly to sit for their yearly examination, and are desirous of knowing whether, in the event of any of them failing in their examinations, Parliament would pass legislation, overriding the decision of the University examiners—I am, Sir, &c.,

J. SCOLLIN,
Vice-President Dental Students' Society.

News 20-10-32

S.A. GEOLOGISTS TO HELP

Big Australian Work Planned

SIR Edgeworth David, the eminent geologist, said this afternoon before he left for Sydney that three of Adelaide's most prominent geologists had agreed to help him prepare a comprehensive work on the geology of Australia.

"Their assistance will be of great value," said Sir Edgeworth. "Sir Douglas Mawson will assist with observations on the radio-active minerals in the Commonwealth, such as those at Mount Paynter. He will also assist with his knowledge of the geology of Central Australia and of the northern Flinders Range."

Dr. L. Keith Ward will re-write an important chapter of the book dealing with artesian and sub-artesian areas in Australia. He is recognised as one of the foremost authorities on this subject in Australia," said Sir Edgeworth.

"Dr. C. E. Fenner will cover the physiography of South Australia and Victoria." Sir Edgeworth has spent a large proportion of his short stay in Adelaide in discussion with Sir Douglas Mawson and Prof. T. Harvey Johnston on the ancient fossils of the pre-Cambrian age at Beaumont and Teatree Gully.

These fossils are believed to be seven or eight million years old. Sir Edgeworth hopes to return in the near future to carry out more intensive research on them.