

UNIVERSITY NOT TO BLAME

Prof. Stewart on Homework

'UNFAIR CHARGE'

Although the Director of Education (Mr. Adey) said yesterday that excessive homework was due to the over-zealousness of teachers rather than to the examination bogey, many parents blame "cramming" for exams.

Prof. McKellar Stewart, chairman of the Public Examinations Board—which controls the intermediate, leaving, and leaving honors examinations—said in "The News" on Thursday that if it were proved that homework was injurious to children of from 10 to 13 he would favor, from that viewpoint, the abolition of the intermediate test.

In a further contribution to the discussion today, Prof. Stewart said that the University could not be blamed for any excessive homework done for the public examinations.

ONUS ON BOARD MEMBERS

"The board sets syllabuses which are calculated to entail a reasonable amount of work. As the board includes high school head masters, principals of girls and boys' colleges, and teachers, the onus is on them to see that the syllabuses are not excessive," said Prof. Stewart.

"Blame for homework is sometimes placed on the University because of the entrance qualifications which it requires. But this is unfair. Only 10 per cent. of high school pupils come to the University, yet the others have to do the same homework.

"It is difficult to generalise on the subject of homework. But children of 10 to 13 are shooting up like growing plants, and employment at night—when they should be asleep—may be injurious.

"Some children take to homework like ducks to water; others find it wearisome. Children must learn to work and must also learn to relax. The nature of their home surroundings and whether they are away from home are also factors. It may be better for some children if they have plenty of homework to keep them occupied.

INTERMEDIATE PROBLEM

"For the little fellow who does a quarter of an hour's homework it may be child's play—both figuratively and actually. And students of 16 or 17 who study for the Leaving Examination are able to stand the strain. It is the Intermediate stage which presents the problem."

Referring to Prof. Stewart's statement about the Intermediate examination, Mr. Adey said today that if the University discontinued the Intermediate, the Education Department in all probability would institute an examination for an Intermediate certificate—perhaps on different lines to the present test.