News 19.8.35

CONFERENCE OF VARSITY LEADERS

19 AUG. 1935

Chair of Anthropology

MELBOURNE, Monday.—The administrative heads of the six Australian universities met in conference at the University of Melbourne today to discuss at the first comprehensive meeting of the kind, matters concerning the Australian group of universities.

The vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne (Dr. R. E. Priestley) presided, the visiting delegates being Dr. R. S. Wallace (Sydney), Sir William Mitchell (Adelaide), Prof. Alcott (representing Queensland), Prof. Whitfield (Western Australia), and Prof. Morris Miller (Tasmania).

The vice-chancellors met in camera, and it is likely that their discussions will last until late today. After the conference the visitors will be entertained by Dr. Priestley at dinner and the theatre.

One of the chief subjects being considered is a request that the vice-chancellors should represent to the Commonwealth Government the desirability of the establishment of chairs of anthropology.

The suggestion emanates from a resolution of last year's international conference in London of ethnologists and anthropologists, and it has been transmitted by the Australian representatives of the international conference, of whom the Professor of Anatomy at the University of Melbourne (Prof. Wood Jones) is one.

Specifically the proposal in understood to be that the Commonwealth should make financial provision for the study of physical anthropology—the anatomy of primitive races—in the universities.

The University of Sydney gives training in social anthropology only and that is the culture of primitive peoples. There is no chair of anthropology in any of the other universities.

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PROBLEMS OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

20 AUG. 1935

Vice-Chancellors Meet In Melbourne

MELBOURNE, August 19.

The Vice-Chancellor of the Melbourne University (Dr. R. E. Priestly) presided at the meeting of the Australian Vice-Chancellors at the University today. The other Vice-Chancellors present were Dr. R. S. Wallace (Sydney), Sir William Mitchell (Adelaide), Professor H. Alcock (Queensland), Professor E. Morris Miller (Tasmania), and Professor H. E. Whitfield (Western Australia).

Recommendations had been made by the conference to the Carnegie Corporation for travelling grants for members of the teaching staff of Australian universities. As this method was considered unsatisfactory, the conference decided to ask the Carnegie Trust to lodge a sum of money in Australia for the conference to use at its discretion for making travelling grants.

The conference decided to hold a general meeting of all Australian universities at Melbourne in October, 1936, to discuss various problems of university administration and teaching. The question of the recognition of Australian degrees by Oxford University was left to Dr. R. E. Priestly and Dr. R. S. Wallace, when they attend the universities' conference to be held at Cambridge in June of next year. Each Australian university will prepare a case for the consideration of the Oxford University on every degree which they desire to be recognised.

The conference will be continued tomorrow.

Medical Work In Egypt

Dr. R. Trudinger, of the Sudan United Mission, gave a lecture on medical work in Egypt to nurses of the Australian Trained Nursing Association at the Adelaide University last night. Dr. Trudinger illustrated his talk with lantern slides of the Sudanese, and showed pictures of patients suffering from various tropical diseases. The medical mission is situated in the Upper Nile Province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

LIFE AND EDUCATION

20 AUG. 1935

Some "Half-Truths" Discussed

By E. ALLEN, Inspector Of Secondary Schools

Underlying the discontent with examinations and curricula, is the feeling that the traditional intellectual outlook has grown to be too narrow for the interests of mankind. The trouble is that many outsiders with no knowledge of how the mind grows make this feeling articulate in the form of published half-truths. Here is a sample:—

"Education which is not modern shares the fate of all organic things which are kept too long." Unfortunately, the blessed word "modern" does not solve our difficulties. Time makes no difference to truth, nor is its value affected by what we think or feel about it. What is true in the assertion, is that knowledge keeps no better than fish. For successful education, knowledge, even if old, must be drawn from the sea with all the freshness of its immediate importance. Because we must acquiesce in a miserably low level of mathematical achievement among cultured people, it is fatal to say that geometry is not relevant to modern life. Even from the low "bread and butter" view of education, its simple generalisations have a widespread application to such divergent things as heat, electricity, distance, wheelbarrows, pumps, tides, social phenomena and (in these modern days) the measurement of intelligence. Our part is to see that mental power is gained through the gradual grasping of a system of thought. If we can show the relevance of the important generalisations, all the better. What examiners can do from their side, is to leave out the more recondite ideas that bring joy to the heart of the pure mathematician

"Building" Character

But when one reads in the leading article of a country newspaper that we must change our curriculum for "subjects that build character," well, this is really too bad! If this view is a product of democracy, then truly, as Sir William Mitchell says in his "Place of Minds in the World," democracy carries the seed of its downfall within itself. Surely it should be known that a person's character is measured by the resistance overcome in achieving an interest, with all that this involves of an ever improving grasp of systems of thought, emotion, and conduct. Characters may be good or bad, soft or hard, devoted to low causes or high. A person may more easily achieve an interest in beer than in similar triangles, and surely it is better for a child to grasp the greatness of Rome than the amount of butter-fat in milk. This business of educating is not as easy as it looks to the outsider. In character, as in curricula, there is always "choice" to be considered. We are free to choose the good or the bad, what leads to the high life or the low; and while we may not be placing sufficient importance on the aesthetic and the practical training, we must not underestimate the intellectual side. The imaginative grasp of truth, so necessary in future action, whether in business or in private life, can best come at school and at University, where, for probably the only period of his life, the pupil is free from "doing" anything. Such freedom is necessary for thought. That is why the student should be free from any compulsion, save the necessity of grasping the objects of study that increase his power. Far from encouraging the so-called bread and butter subjects, it is our duty to free the child from the forms of his future slavery. The word school implies discipline. We discipline his mind in the fields of thought, emotion, and conduct, choosing as far as possible objects that have inherent value for mind. Hence the importance of languages and mathematics, which give more quickly than any other subjects the power of analysis and the power of making generalisations. Their very difficulty is an asset. Let us not scrap them because many children cannot pass them. Rather let us make the steps more gradual, cut out unnecessary detail, and test what is relevant. For beginners, the course has too many holes, the approaches are monotonous, the bunkers are too high, and the examination bogey too low. Let us limit the number of inherently difficult subjects, take them by easier stages, and allow more choice from other fields of interest (as far as the purse permits). But above all, let us not without deep consideration remove from the curriculum subjects which for centuries have proved their worth.

Research Council To Meet In Adelaide For First Time

The full Council for Scientific and Industrial Research will meet in Adelaide for the first time tomorrow. Delegates to the meeting, which will open at the University, will include the chairman (Sir George Julius), the executive committee, the chairmen of the State committees, and co-opted members. Every State will be represented, and the meeting will probably continue until Friday. Most of the delegates are expected to arrive from the eastern States tomorrow. The chairman of the Western Australian committee will not attend, but will be represented by a deputy.

Dr. L. B. Bull, the chief of the animal health division of the council who arrived by the express from Melbourne yesterday, and who will address the council, said that formerly these meetings were held in Melbourne and Sydney. Usually two are held annually, and the meeting in Adelaide will be the first for this year.

AUSTRALIAN SCIENTISTS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Playing Big Part In Research

RHODES SCHOLARS GAIN HONORS

Commonwealth's High Reputation Upheld

Australian scientists in England are playing a not inconsiderable part in the English scientific world, says Dr. H. L. Brose, director of the Physics Department at University College, Nottingham. Dr. Brose himself has obtained a high reputation in physics, and his appraisal of the work of other Australian scientists in England, many of whom were Rhodes Scholars, has greater value because he personally understands the work done.

He has been in close touch with all of those mentioned in this article.

20 AUG. 1935

By H. L. BROSE

Of the Australians who have attained eminence in England, Sir Roy Lister Robinson must receive first mention. He was educated at St. Peter's College, Adelaide, and Magdalen College, Oxford, being the South Australian Rhodes Scholar of 1905. He obtained his blue at Oxford, and also first class honors in natural science. During the war he took an active part in the Ministries of Munitions and Agriculture. He was knighted in 1931, and in the following year was appointed chairman of the Forestry Commission in London. He is a regular guest at the Rhodes dinner at Oxford, given annually by the Rhodes trustees to the old Rhodes Scholars and to those in their last year of residence at Oxford. He is a keen Australian, and deeply interested in the progress and development of his native country, so I found last year when we were neighbors at a celebration at Oxford.

The Younger Bragg

A few months ago, I was invited to inspect some new scientific equipment at Metropolitan Vickers; so I took the opportunity to visit my old friend, Professor W. L. Bragg, who is head of the department of physics at Manchester University. Bragg was born in Adelaide in 1890, and after a very distinguished career in Adelaide and in Cambridge, he became lecturer in physics at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1914. The splendid work on X-rays which he did in conjunction with his father, gained for them the Nobel Prize in 1915. During the latter part of the war he was technical adviser on sound ranging to the map section. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society, and is regarded as a very likely candidate for a physics chair at Oxford or Cambridge in the near future. One of the directors of Metropolitan Vickers told me how profitable they had found their close association with Bragg's laboratory. Bragg himself receives very useful material help in return. His method of X-ray analysis of metals is of great importance to all steelworks. Recently he has applied X-rays to the investigation of organic substances where it promises to be of assistance to the chemist and metallurgist. Bragg is probably to be regarded as the greatest living Australian scientist of the present time, and his career is by no means ended, as he is only 45 years old.

Notable Rhodes Scholars

Another young scientist who has been astonishingly successful in England is Howard W. Florey, who was recently appointed Professor of Pathology at Oxford, after having been Hunter Professor of Pathology at Sheffield University. He was the South Australian Rhodes Scholar of 1921. He has gained almost every possible honor in medical science since that time, having been in succession a Rockefeller Travelling Research Fellow, a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and a Freedom Research Fellow of the London Hospital. In an adventurous mood, he accompanied the Oxford Arctic Expedition to Spitzbergen in 1924. He has published many researches, all of a high standard.

An Adelaide Rhodes Scholar of somewhat earlier date, who has also achieved a high reputation in medical work, is Dr. H. W. B. Cairns, who was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1921. He is now Surgeon to the Neurosurgical Department of London Hospital, and is regarded as one of the most brilliant brain surgeons in England. He keeps well abreast of the work in his own sphere of activity by travelling frequently to the chief centres on the Continent, particularly to Vienna, where he has many friends in the medical and surgical faculties at the University. He has written important papers on the treatment of head injuries and on intercranial surgery. He is one of the comparatively few living surgeons who have successfully operated on the living brain.

Other South Australians

Before passing on to the physicists again, I must refer to three other Adelaide medical men who have done good work in England. Stanford Howard is attached to the London Hospital, and is honorary surgeon to the Battersea General Hospital. He has devised a new transfusion needle, and has written on empyema. His unfailing cheerful disposition and pleasant manner have made him a particular favorite at the London Hospital. The second medical man is Dr. H. I. Coombs, who originally left Adelaide and Oxford with first class degrees in chemistry, and then became interested in biochemistry in Cambridge, when he worked in close collaboration with Sir Gowland Hopkins, who was president of the Royal Society at that time. From Cambridge Coombs gained a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship, which enabled him to study medicine at Harvard. After obtaining his degree of doctor of medicine there, he returned to England to take up an important position in the clinical department of the Birmingham General Hospital, where his unusually wide training is of great value in cases which are difficult to diagnose. Coombs and Howard were both Rhodes scholars.

The third name to be mentioned is Dr. Reg Warnecke, who started his medical course in Adelaide (he was born at Nuriootpa), and completed it in London. Although he has been in general practice since that time, he has succeeded in building up a small laboratory of his own in which he has undertaken researches in collaboration with others. In conjunction with the present writer, he devised a new form of pulse-beat recorder, which is much superior to the old sphygmograph. It was largely due to his enterprise and initiative that a sub-department for cancer research by physical and biochemical methods was instituted in the Physics Department at Nottingham. He has recently written, in collaboration with Dr. J. W. Whitaker, principal of the Croydon Polytechnic, and a research chemist, a paper on the fluctuations in the amount of phosphorus in the serum of cancer and non-cancer patients. This work was considered of sufficient value in Berlin to merit publication in a German medical journal.

Work In Physics

Of the many Australians who have in recent years gone to Cambridge to do research in physics, none has been more successful than Dr. M. L. Oliphant, whose researches appear in regular sequence in the Proceedings of the Royal Society. Oliphant has worked in close collaboration with Lord Rutherford in the last few years, and has published many researches conjointly with him. When Dr. Chadwick, the discoverer of the mysterious "neutron," was recently appointed to the Chair of Physics at Liverpool, Lord Rutherford chose Oliphant as his successor as assistant director of the Cavendish Laboratory, which is indeed a high honor. Not a little of the information that has recently been gained about the structure of the atom by bombarding it with fast but almost