

Reg. 6th Aug 03.

### EDUCATION REGULATIONS.

Mr. PEAKE moved:—"That the new education regulations, as laid upon the table of the House on July 2, 1903, be disallowed." It was not a pleasant task for him to again have to move a motion of that character. He would have preferred to have seen an agreement between the teachers and the Government relative to the salaries. Some time elapsed before he made up his mind to undertake the duty, and he first approached another gentleman who could have presented a clearer and more forcible case to table the motion. That member refused, but promised to heartily support him. In his speech on the Address-in-reply the Chief Secretary stated that he (Mr. Peake) had been the means of stirring up dissatisfaction among the teachers, railway men, and police officers. What he had done in that direction had been done in the House and in consequence of the support of the members. Bad as the regulations were last year he took it from a very careful study and com-

parison, that those now tabled were infinitely worse. They could not forget that last year the Minister of Education had said—"The teachers will get it much worse next year." And they had got it much worse. Whereas the legislation last year was like whipping the teachers with whips, this year it was like whipping them with scorpions. He knew that the head teachers were now in a better position, but he was judging the system as a whole. The regulations, he repeated, were infinitely worse. The Government had got an idea into their head that the country was dissatisfied with the present system of education. Some of the best supporters of the system were to be found among the Opposition, some among the best Government supporters, and some in the Labour Party, so he failed to see from what the Government drew this conclusion. It seemed to him that it was the effect of a nightmare that had been sitting on the chest of the Minister of Education, and by constant repetition to the Ministers had become to be believed by the rest of the Government. If our present education system had become overloaded, as the Government affirmed, and grown by some £18,000 during the last four or five years, who had been responsible for this growth? Unless it had been a fair growth, commensurate with the increase of children and schools, then the Government themselves were responsible for the overloading of the system. Accordingly they were simply making a rod for their own backs. He was not saying for a moment that the cost of the system had become out of proportion for the state. He maintained that a large part of this increased cost had been simply the result of increased population throughout the state during the years mentioned. There had been new settlements and a demand for new schools, and they all knew that the small provincial school could not be done away with without doing an injustice to the residents of those parts. It was those schools that had helped to swell the total cost of education. On July 8 of this year the Treasurer said:—"Taking the period from 1895 (in which year Mr. Hartley declared that the classification had broken down) to 1901, it is seen that, while the average attendance increased 4,465, the annual cost increased £22,243." At the Town Hall on June 20 the Minister of Education said:—"As compared with the cost per child in average attendance in 1897-8, the cost had gone up in 1901-2 by 5.2 per cent." Those two statements contained the case against the department and the teachers from the Government point of view. Would it not be fair in making that assertion as to bulk expenditure to enquire into the causes of the increase, and find out where the money had gone? The statement would appear to be that it had gone in teachers' salaries, and that to restore the balance those salaries should be reduced. As a matter of fact, the cost of the department had been added to by several notable things. The Treasurer admitted himself that the average attendance of children had gone up by 4,465, and, taking the average cost of educating a child at £2 7/4 that accounted for £10,000 of the extra amount. That would be admitted to be legitimate growth. Then, also, in obedience to the resolutions of the House, the Government installed a sixth class in the schools, which must of necessity have caused increased expenditure. They could not get such a valuable thing for nothing. Therefore members would not be surprised to find that the addition of the sixth classes had added considerably to the total amount. (Mr. Mitchell—"How many schools have the sixth class?") A good many. (Mr. Mitchell—"The city schools.") And many beyond the city. The Education Department had striven to extend the sixth class as far as possible and do justice to the country as well as the city scholars. A good deal of money had gone in making a more expensive system of training the teachers. The pupils used to be trained in the public schools by the masters at a very cheap rate and in a fairly effective way. They had now established a Pupil Teachers' Training School in Adelaide, and the expense was considerable. In 1896 the cost of training was £986, and it had gone up to £4,621 in 1901. They had more expensive teaching staffs in the schools because, owing to the abolition of the great number of pupil teachers who were giving their services, they had assistants at higher salaries. The House was therefore justified in saying to the Government that the extra cost was owing to the administration and the other lines which he had indicated. The Government should be prepared to defend the increases made in such a way. In addition there were the agricultural schools. (Mr. Mitchell—"They were killed.") He was speaking of a term of years during which those schools came into being, thrived and died. (Mr. McDonald—"The Government is still paying for them.") No. The School of Mines took them over, and they did not get much grant for them from the Government. The action of the School of Mines in rescuing those schools when the Government intended to do away with them reflected infinite credit on that institution. Bursaries and scholarships had also increased the total, and he took pride in the fact that he was partly responsible for giving the

clever country children a chance to come to the city and take advantage of their educational system. While they were increasing the work of the department they should not object to increasing the cost, and they should not blame the teachers. The total cost of primary education in 1901 was £149,795, whilst in 1896 it was £131,427, an increase of £18,368. The salaries accounted for £9,439 of that increase, but the teachers had not eaten into that amount to that extent for the increased payments to the new assistants, and others were accounted for in that sum. The attendance of children in 1896 was 64,479, and in 1901 69,115, an increase of 4,636 children. In 1896 there were 351 provisional schools and in 1901 422, or an increase of 71. The smallest schools were the most expensive. Under the new system of training the number of pupil teachers had been largely reduced. Their places had been taken by acting assistants at much higher salaries. Thus the cost of the public schools increased enormously at once without any appreciable relief to the teachers. In 1896 the cost of training was £986 and in 1901 £4,621, or last year £4,531. Correspondents who took a deep interest in education had told him that the Training College was only another college, and that it would be cheaper if the teachers were trained at the colleges than at that institution. It was a great mistake to multiply institutions if they could prevent it. What led up to the alterations? Two or three years ago the Public Service Board sat and reviewed the whole of the Civil Service of South Australia. The board recommended the alterations with regard to teachers' salaries, but they also recommended alterations throughout the whole Civil Service. The Government never took up that report. They never moved the adoption of it, and thereby indicated that they were in favour of it. They took up one part, and said to themselves that the Education Department was the one in which they would be justified in attacking the salaries. (Treasurer—"We had no knowledge of the report till afterwards.") The report had been before the House for a couple of years now. It was strange indeed that the Ministry only dropped down on the Education Department. (Treasurer—"There have been reductions in the Crown Lands Department by 15 per cent.") There had been a decrease in the work, and as the work of the school department had not been reduced they could not make a comparison in that instance. The Government were responsible for the appointment of the Public Service Classification Board. It cost thousands of pounds, and it had been a dead letter. When economy was needed the Education Department and the teachers were looked upon as most fitting for experiment. The teachers did not complain last year, nor would they complain this year if all the departments had been reduced. (Treasurer—"We invariably reduce all departments as officers come out.") That meant a stepping up into a higher position for the civil servant, although the salary might not be as high as that paid to the previous occupant of the position. The House was willing to help the Government, and decided to allow these reductions to remain for one year. The Minister of Education appointed a committee in 1902, consisting of the Inspector-General, the Assistant Inspector-General, Inspector Neale, and three teachers from the larger schools and two from the smaller schools, to formulate a scheme. They brought up a scheme that showed an estimated reduction of some £13,000 in the departmental cost. It was to be effected by raising the number of children in the large schools. First-class schools were raised from those having an average attendance of 600 to an average attendance of 725. The committee's report was a fair and honest attempt to meet the position forced on them. The Minister of Education evidently did not have sufficient confidence in his own committee to accept its report. He amended the report, and made an estimated saving of £20,000. Only the teachers were made to suffer. The board was abolished. The Chairman became Inspector-General at an increase of £50. Another member of the board was dropped gently, and made Assistant Inspector-General, and a third member was called Senior Inspector. The salary at present paid to the Inspector-General was not a penny too high. If anything it was too little. They must pay special salaries for expert work.

The board made no suggestion for decreasing the staff of inspectors, notwithstanding that there were 15,000 less children subject to examination than in the old time. All the work formerly used to be minutely examined. Now the teachers did most of the examining, and the inspectors had principally to inspect the work. The Government called the inspectors together with reference to reducing the inspectorial staff, but they decided that it could not be interfered with unless the efficiency of the system were impaired. They put that position strongly, but although there had been a vacancy in the staff owing to the transference of Inspector Clark the inspectors could spare one of their number to canvass in behalf of the superannuation fund. It seemed logical that if they could spare him for that purpose they could do without his services altogether. The methods of promotion under the regulations were faulty and unfair. If the Minister's scheme were adopted by the House the only way they would be able to save money would be by practically overriding the regulations and making them subservient to the will of the Inspector-General for the time being. The system was too rigid, lacked elasticity, and he was afraid that the Government would find them unworkable. An energetic teacher would always attract children. About Adelaide there were plenty of instances where teachers had been withdrawn from some of the larger schools and given smaller ones because of the greater capacity and ability of other teachers. Under the new regulations the teacher who was more progressive and enterprising would have to do extra work and receive no extra pay for it. The other officer whose school was dwindling in numbers, and whose work was consequently decreasing, could smile, as his salary was fixed. The only true method of classification was according to the numerical strength of the schools. The teachers should be paid in proportion to the status of their school and

the character of their work. No artificial restriction such as a fixed ratio could reward merit or penalize incompetency. Automatic promotion did not produce the best results. He was not referring to masters but to schools in general. The regulations would benefit the mediocrities in the service. No saving would be made unless the salaries of the teachers were fixed in proportion to the work they did. Teachers who had never been brilliant men had been given schools above their capacity, and the regulations did not provide facilities for the promotion of men with ability. The Chief Secretary had stated, in reply to a question put by Mr. Brooker, that it was not true that a teacher was recently promoted under the new regulation to a school with 50 more scholars, and a salary of £20 less than previously paid. Before the transfer of Mr. Sutton from Oakbank to Murray Bridge it was at first thought that under the new regulations his salary, if he were transferred, would be reduced; but this was a mistake, and was never acted upon. It was only by stringing the regulations that Mr. Sutton had been sent to Murray Bridge. The school there had an attendance of 129 scholars against 97 at Oakbank. It was the intention of the Government to have sent that teacher to Murray Bridge—a bigger school—and give him £20 less, but the idea was proved to be so monstrous that it was decided to make the transference without a reduction in salary. That teacher had more work at present than he had at Oakbank. He was not complaining that teachers of schools with a roll call of 900 or 1,000 got too much when they were given £400 a year, because they practically had charge of workshop where some of the best work in the state was being turned out. He did not say that their salaries were too high, but it showed that the smaller and middle-class teachers were punished by the new regulations in more marked degree than those at the top. They had heard comparisons made with the cost of the department in Victoria, and they were told that they could not pay a higher standard than that in vogue in that State. They were told, too, that the South Australian standard was too high when the comparison was made. It was almost impossible to make a fair comparison with Victoria, as the circumstances were so different. For instance, perquisites were more in the sister State. All those things counted—sick leave, the right to earn money, out of school hours, and the long leave of absence, to which South Australian teachers were not entitled. The Victorian scale of salaries had been fixed in 1893, a year that was memorable for its commercial crisis, when there was general financial difficulty. The fact that no further reductions had been made was a fair argument that the Victorian Government considered that they were down to bedrock. Besides, when the scale was fixed Victoria had to take into account the heavy expenditure under which the department was groaning at the time, paying nearly £80,000 a year for pensions. (Mr. Brooker—"You are proving the case for a committee of enquiry very well.") He was not asking for that, but he was not prepared to say that the time was not ripe for such a course. In the Victorian education report for 1901-2 the Minister of Education said:—"It is to be regretted that so far nothing has been done by the Legislature to remove the hope-killing block to promotion which affects the lower ranks of the teachers." In the same report the Director of Education (Mr. Tate), a very able man, said:—"The effect of the Regrading Act of 1895 has been to block all promotion and desirable transfers to the great body of teachers. It is hard to maintain enthusiasm and keen interest in work under the above conditions." When speaking on the Education Bill of 1901 the Hon. Agar Wynne (Minister of Education) said:—"The Education Department at the present time was face to face with a serious shortage of teachers, owing to the unattractiveness of the service since the severe retrenchment of 1893 and the consequent blocking of promotion which had prevailed since then. It was very difficult to get junior teachers, especially male teachers. Recently applications were called for something like 100 vacancies, and he thought there were only about three applicants." In speaking on the Teachers' Bill, Mr. Fink, M.L.A., said:—"I do desire to point out that Parliament did some few years ago retrench the Education Estimates to some extent, possibly under the spur of necessity, but in a most unintelligent and drastic way, and that retrenchment policy, whatever the financial requirements of the time might have been, was fraught with the greatest destruction to the progress of education and the efficiency of the department. I do say that the greatest of all our national resources are the character and faculties of our children." According to that gentleman the education system was regarded in Victoria rather as a luxury than as a necessity, and that was just the way the Government looked at it here. Whenever there was any financial distress it was a case of "attack the Education Department." On the other hand he held that the system should be looked upon in the light of a necessity, and not by any means as a luxury. In the anxiety for cheap labour the educational service was getting into the hands of the women, and out of the hands of the men. He did not say that in disparagement of the ladies, some of whom did excellent work, but there was a danger that if they went in more and more for women teachers it might have a marked effect upon future generations, as boys needed the strong hand of a man to rule them. According to Coghlan, South Australia paid less per head than any other state in the Commonwealth for the education of her children. In Western Australia the cost per head, including school premises, was in the 1902 Coghlan £5 18/3; in Victoria, £4 13/11; in New Zealand, £4 8/2; in New South Wales, £4 7/5; in Queensland, £4 1/3; in Tasmania, £3 12/7; and in South Australia, £3 12/7. The cost of educating the pupil teacher was a side issue, and he was not going into the question of where savings could best be effected in the department. The case he had in hand was that by altering the status and stipends of the teachers they were breaking covenants with