

THE EDUCATION POLICY.

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The Register could not be other than gratified that the Premier has, with characteristic courage and foresight, adopted the principles of education reform recommended by that journal for acceptance in this State. As Mr. Peake truly says, every country has to work out its own salvation in the matter of national education, and, while probably no claim could be maintained for absolutely original ideas on the subject in the abstract, genuine statesmanship is required in order to supply peculiar needs in the most efficient and economical manner. The distinguishing features of Mr. Peake's programme are its completeness and its appropriateness, and it may be said also to reflect credit upon the enthusiasm of the professional head of the department, Mr. Williams. In its comprehensive progressiveness, it marks an epoch in the history of education in the State, and if the campaign outlined shall be wisely and energetically pursued it will place South Australians among the foremost peoples in "knowledge, power, and skill—the golden keys which unlock to man Nature's storehouse of wealth." This statement of an adequate reason for an expansion of State education involves much more than the materialistic advantages which at first sight appear alone to be indicated. "Nature guards her storehouse so jealously," because she has a hidden purpose to obtain from man the highest expressions of industrial efficiency, which cannot be reached apart from the realization of ethical values, so that happiness may be conjoined with prosperity. No other investment of public money can be so profitable as that made upon education, provided that the system adopted is sound and thorough and achieves practical ends. While Mr. Peake's scheme compasses the whole range of instruction, from the kindergarten to the University, the Ministry proposes to concentrate immediate efforts upon immediate needs. Reforms fail of fruition when enthusiasm overlooks the psychological requirement that the ripening process must be timed by the growth of public opinion. The Premier has a complete plan, a scientific design, and well-considered methods, but he intends to make haste slowly but surely.

The Minister of Education recognises that his first duty is to improve the primary system relative mainly to infant and rural schools. Pioneer settlers are entitled to a liberal elementary education for their children—the best possible in all the circumstances. Consolidation and travelling schools must be forthcoming, and provision made for recovering the undoubted talent which is now sometimes buried in the country to the loss of the community. Here the problem is a twofold one of means and men. The departmental purse is limited, and limited too is the supply of suitable teachers. The latter restriction is largely due to defective methods for training students, which we are assured are in course of being corrected. The extension of secondary education is also retarded by the paucity of skilled instructors, and the outside competition for ability may make it necessary to offer additional inducements to

promising youths. The Government's next aim concerns the establishment of a secondary system on sound lines. In this connection a preliminary condition must be the standardization of secondary education—a clear definition where the primary ends and the secondary begins, and where the secondary closes and University training starts. Meeting this requirement will involve a scientific articulation of the whole educational organism, including a radical revision of the University's relations to the public. The Register's suggestion that the High Schools should be extended to the suburbs will be carried out, but regarding the High School and District High School movement one important consideration should be remembered—that the State cannot afford to admit pupils free who do not furnish ample evidence of capacity and industry to benefit by the costly instruction. Secondary education should not be placed on the plane of compulsory elementary education—it should be viewed as a privilege for those who answer the double tests of intellect and character. The Premier also undertakes the task of organizing the work of country technical schools, as that of establishing evening continuation schools. Both of these enterprises may be associated with the desire to direct and improve education for industrial purposes. In order to lead up to this supplementary preparation for trade craft and technical occupations, it will be found desirable to extend manual training in the primary schools.

The Register has repeatedly directed attention to the systemless and wasteful condition of State-subsidized technical education, and one of the first steps in connection with the organization of technical schools and the establishment of continuation schools should be the transfer of the School of Mines, in respect to its major work of trades schools, to the Education Department. These trades schools, in conjunction with the late School of Design, should then be co-ordinated to answer the purposes of city continuation schools. It may be requisite to import from England a competent inspector of technical education. The School of Mines in relation to its higher branches affiliated with the University should be established as a Technical College. The Premier is probably wiser than his critics in refraining, for the present at least, from a revolutionary interference with the University. By means of scholarships and bursaries the State is doing all that may be fairly expected in order to cultivate the best talent from the public schools. More urgent

than the abolition of University fees or the grant of additional endowment is the need to bring the institution into harmony with modern requirements, but, as Mr. Peake points out, even that reform cannot be accomplished until secondary education shall have been further developed. It would be desirable for the State Governments to arrange for a periodical inspection of the Universities by an outside authority of the highest standing. The public should be placed in a position to judge whether full value is received for the large grants of taxpayers' moneys. In any case, the building up of the national education system will in time force essential changes in University administration. Meanwhile Mr. Peake

is acting prudently in strengthening the foundations of the primary system and establishing on sound lines the secondary system, which, as Mr. Board has remarked, is the keystone of the educational arch.

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The Premier delivered a carefully-prepared speech on Mr. Ryan's motion in regard to the increase of facilities for students entering the Adelaide University. He began by congratulating Mr. Ryan on his speech, but expressed regret that he had not recognised what the State has done already. Knowledge, power, and skill, he said, were the golden keys which unlocked Nature's storehouse of wealth, and the Government were fully alive to the importance of education in all its phases. The Adelaide High School, he claimed, was the first free High School in Australia, and it was second to none in the Commonwealth. The great obstacle to extending the system in the country was the lack of teachers. The Government had established 54 scholarships of a value of £3,200. The great need was for efficient infant, primary, and secondary schools. Then came the University and Technical Schools. Mr. Ryan wished to put on the fourth storey before the third was completed. It was better that there should be a good system of secondary education, free to every boy and girl, than that a University education should be obtainable on the same conditions. There was no chance of increasing the University grant until the secondary schools were more developed. Mention had been made of America's expenditure on universities, but here the Government, in the Technical Schools, the Agricultural College, the School of Mines, and the Training School for teachers, were doing work which the University did in America, while in the United States primary education was not carried out by the State. Mr. Peake pointed to great Australians who had succeeded without University education, and remarked that brilliant students, energetic in the morning of their life, were often drowsy in the afternoon, and sleepy at night. The Government desired to improve the primary system, to establish a secondary system on sound lines, to organise the work of country schools, and to establish evening continuation schools. That was a varied and comprehensive programme. Mr. Ryan had jumped at something many years ahead.

Mr. Denny warmly supported the motion. He did not consider that the distribution of £1,000 a year among ten students was much for the Government to do in the cause of higher education, more particularly as they only gave the University about £7,000 a year. This State, he said, paid less per head for education than many of its Australasian neighbors, although it would be to the benefit of the community to give brainy students an opportunity of placing their feet firmly on the ladder of life. Mr. Dankel stated that education made for equality. The State did not know what it lost by not enabling a really clever boy to have a university education. He hoped the High Schools would ultimately knock out the private colleges. Mr. Coneybeer secured the adjournment of the debate.