

HIGHER EDUCATION.

COMMISSION'S ENQUIRIES.

EVILS OF DUAL CONTROL.

PROFESSOR CHAPMAN'S STRAIGHT TALK.

The University Commission continued its sittings at Parliament House on Tuesday under the presidency of Mr. T. Ryan, M.P.

Professor Chapman continued his evidence, and said that he desired to put forward certain views regarding the subject matter of the enquiry. He made the statement purely on his own responsibility, and a majority of those on the University council knew nothing what council knew nothing whatever of them.

GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

The Chairman—You are, I know, very friendly to both institutions—the School of Mines and the University.

Professor Chapman—Most decidedly. You will remember at the last sitting of the commission I expressed myself in favor of the proposal that the Government should take over the direct control of the technical schools in the country. If this is done and a consistent scheme of technical education is to be evolved the central school in Adelaide can no longer remain isolated. We may divide the present work of the school into three parts. First there is the preparatory school, in which boys who are not sufficiently advanced to enter for the associate course are given preparatory training. This was a useful addition at the time that the school was inaugurated, but since the establishment of high schools by the Government there is not the same need for its existence. Continuing, Professor Chapman said that at the School of Mines according to the figures supplied by Sir Langdon Bonython, there are 1618 students. Of this number only 91 were associate students, so that the rest were students attending the technical classes, who had no intention of taking the professional associateships. The bulk of the students, therefore, were those who sought tuition in trades or industries the teaching of which was the proper field of the school.

TRAINING APPRENTICES.

As yet the State had scarcely approached the important matter of training apprentices, and it was on that phase of technical education that they wanted to concentrate their attention. The organization of this branch of education throughout the State could be best carried out by the Government. Having professional courses at the school clashed with the work of the University. To put the matter briefly, he held that they could not plant the educational tree with seeds of dissension at the roots of it. The only solution of the difficulty he saw was the separation of the associate course from the School of Mines and its embodiment in the work of the University. The great difficulty which country technical schools had to face was the fact that practically all their students attended at night, and the poorness of the preliminary training received by the students. Some of them had been able to go to the University, but as time went on the standard of the preliminary training would become higher. They did not want to see a system grow up by which the different country schools would be able to issue diplomas.

VALUE OF DIPLOMAS.

Diplomas, if they were issued, should be worth having, and should only be issued by the central and most important establishment. Students should sit for examinations at the University, and those examinations should be set by the highest intelligences in the State. The function of the School of Mines, in his opinion, would ultimately become the instruction of students in trade and industrial subjects. In his opinion technical education should be controlled from two centres—the University Council and the Education Department. The University would control from the top downwards, and the department from the bottom upwards, and the two would dovetail into one another in a perfectly natural way. His

objection to Sir Langdon Bonython's scheme was that it was likely to create a conflict of interest from which friction would result. There would be friction between the School of Mines and the University at the top, and conflict all along the line between the technical schools and the high schools in the country. The safety of the State lay in putting technical schools everywhere under Government control. The time had come when they should systematise their educational work. They had established schools here and there without any guiding scheme to conduct them. It was impossible to organize a system in many centres for the fewer centres of control there were the better it would be for the system.

TICKETING STUDENTS.

Mr. Styles—Does a diploma issued by the School of Mines carry as much weight as a University degree?

Professor Chapman—I have frequently received letters from old students asking if the University could not give an engineering degree in its list, instead of the cumbersome honors now bestowed upon students. They wanted a simple engineering degree rather than all the elaborate qualifications which they did get. Nothing so fully ticketed a man as a University degree, for it stamped him as having taken a certain course. He did not want to belittle the diploma issued by the School of Mines, but the mention of the institution in the diploma seemed to signify that the man holding the diploma had only been trained in mining subjects.

Mr. Styles—How is it that the University does not at present give a degree in engineering?

Professor Chapman—Because the University Act circumscribes its operations. The University can confer degrees in arts, music, and science, but no provision is made for conferring engineering degrees, though they are conferred by the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney.

OLD BOYS' OBJECTIONS.

The Chairman—We have been informed that past students of the School of Mines would oppose the swallowing up of the school by the University?

Professor Chapman—I have spoken to several students on the point, and they have expressed great pleasure at the idea. One man to whom I spoke said he showed the prospectus of the school to several mining men in South Africa, and they immediately placed their finger on such subjects as dressmaking &c. This made them think very little of the institution. So far as he had been able to test the feeling of the students he found that they were in favor of the proposal. He had, however, only been able to speak to a few of them.

Do you think that the establishment of an advisory council such as is proposed

in Victoria would prove a success?—That idea is one that all educationalists are watching very keenly. I think that such a council, if it were composed of really able men, would do a lot of good but if it were composed purely of figureheads it would be useless.

PROGRESS BY COMPULSION.

You have spoken of the university as a progressive body. Do you think that it was progressive rather from compulsion than from its own initiative?—I certainly think that all the progressive movements which have been set on foot emanated from within, and not as the result of outside compulsion.

Do you think it would be advisable for the Education Department to issue a leaving certificate, which would be accepted as an entrance certificate by the university?—I am in favor of the idea of leaving certificates being issued by high schools and being accepted by the university. I think if such a system was in vogue it would do away with a lot of cramming that goes on.

Mr. Peake—If you placed this system of education under the Government, how do you think it should be managed?

Professor Chapman—By placing the students I mention under the control of the University it would release the whole of that large institution for use as a school for higher training. I venture to say that it would be absolutely too small in a very short time for the students you would get there.

Under whom would you place the school?—Under the Director of Education, certainly. I want to point this out, that under the present system you must have a clashing of interests. The present system is undesirable, for friction is bound to result.

I understood from the evidence given here the other day that a condition of delightful harmony prevailed between the University and the School of Mines—So there is harmony but under the present system you cannot hope to build up a great engineering school here. Look at what prevails at present. There is an agreement between the School of Mines and the University, but it is terminable at any time. Under such a condition of affairs you cannot hope to build up a thoroughly up-to-date and effective scheme of education. The University does one part of the work and the School of Mines the other.

ILL-EQUIPPED INSTITUTIONS.

Is the equipment of the School of Mines and the University thoroughly up to date?—In regard to engineering neither institution is up to date. Before we can hope to teach engineering thoroughly we must have a properly equipped engineering laboratory.

Mr. Peake—Do you confer degrees in engineering?—No; we have not power to.

Do you think you should have power to do so?—Yes. It would then place our students on an equal footing with those of other universities.

I suppose your council is progressing with the times?—I think you should give the council every credit for progressive work. I have never known a suggestion for advancement which has come from the faculties that has been thrown out by the council.

If your request for a grant of £59,000 is acceded to do you not think that Parliament will want more control over the council?—Representations have already been made to the Government in that respect. I certainly think the Government should have representation on the University council, as the Government would then be in touch with the University. The Government would then see the work the University is doing and there would be greater sympathy between us.

Mr. Green—There are young men who are deprived of the opportunity to continue their studies because they have to work?—They can attend an evening or continuation school.

The question of cost would be a big consideration with them?—If the Government is going to establish evening continuation schools I take it they will be free like the high schools.

You favor remission of the fees or dues?—People are inclined to underrate the value of what they pay nothing for, so that I would favor low rates at a technical school. A young fellow at work is generally able to pay the charges of 5/ a quarter made by the School of Mines in certain courses.

What would you suggest with regard to apprentices?—I think it is the duty of the State to see that all apprentices attend a technical school and that employers give their apprentices time to attend those classes.

If some of those lads proved exceedingly capable what would you do?—An improved system of scholarships is the best means of dealing with that.

Are our present scholarships liberal enough?—No. Victoria, for instance, has a much more liberal system.

You said that engineering should be taught in one place?—Yes. In making that suggestion I am referring to the training of professional men; that is, to the training of young men to be the officers in the engineering world.

You don't suggest concentration of the classes which are held to make the employes learning there better workmen?—No. Those classes could still be held at the technical school.

If we are going to get the best results from our engineering students, would much money need to be spent?—Yes; a considerable sum will need to be spent in the erection of an engineering laboratory.

You are aware that in Germany girls and boys entering factories are required to be given time to attend educational questions?—Yes.

Do you think we should follow that plan?—To a certain extent we should certainly follow it. Of course the well-organised system of Germany would never do for a country like this.

EDUCATION.

HIGHER AND UNIVERSITY.

ROYAL COMMISSION EVIDENCE

The royal commission on higher education and the University of Adelaide held a sitting at Parliament House on Tuesday morning. There were present Mr. T. Ryan, M.P. (chairman), the Hon. A. W. Styles, M.L.C., and Mr. T. Green, M.P.

It was resolved that the commission should sit on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Mr. Chas. Bronner, headmaster of the Goodwood Public School, president of the School-teachers' Union, and president of the Headmasters' Association, said in reply to the Chairman, that he had been preaching 31 years in every grade of school, from a school with seven pupils up to a first-grade school with an attendance of 850. He had noticed there was a change between the regime of Directors Hartley and Williams, but not greater than could be expected in that lapse of time. He was alive to the fact that there must be always improvements in the educational system of a young State like South Australia.

The chairman read a comparison to show that during the period 1901 to 1908, South Australia had made fewer educational changes and had spent less in education than the other States.

Further examined the witness said that the attendance at the public schools to-day was smaller than in 1901. The discrepancy would be about 10,000 if he remembered rightly. The efficiency had not been impaired, and he did not think that the department had become unpopular, for he thought there was the same falling off in private schools. The falling off was not so much in children under 15 years but in children over that age. He did not think the desire of the parents for their children's education had diminished. Rather, he was afraid that the real cause was the children's desire to go to work and earn money. The trouble was that a boy knew that when he was 15 there was no further compulsion for him to go to school and he was anxious to go to work. Witness thought the desire to study only came in later years, at, say, the age of 16 or 17. If the parents were able to supply a little pocket money to the boy of 15 he would not have this desire to go to work. Comparing the aptitude of the children of to-day, and that of children of 10 years ago, the present boy was very much quicker in the mechanical work.

The Chairman—From your experience do you think the applicants to go into teaching have fallen off in numbers?—The work of the Education Department has been hampered in South Australia through the great difficulty in getting teachers to take up the work in the early stages.

Further cross-examined on this point the witness admitted that the great attraction in any profession must be the income, and perhaps one reason why people were not so ready to run into the hard work of an educationist was that

other occupations not requiring so much study were as remunerative. Such positions, however, were not so numerous as those in the Education Department. He would consider that the present salaries of headmasters of schools with attendances of 1000 ought to be much larger than they were now. He didn't doubt that if the Education Department were offering many positions at £600 to £7000 a year men of better calibre would be plentiful. He regarded the improvements provided for by the Education Bill to be absolutely necessary for the welfare of the department. He admitted that it might be beneficial for all agencies from primary education to the university be under one control, and thought that all the auxiliaries of education would be better controlled by one body. He would not care to express an opinion as to the advisability of the University being the great controlling body of education, which would be a very large experiment. He might, however, say that the efficiency of South Australian education might be well retained by its control by a body of experts from the University. He knew no fatal objection to the Education Department having attached to it the elementary work of the School of Mines.

Regarding truancy in the schools, the witness said he had not known an instance of this at the Goodwood School for years, and thought many other schools had had the same experience. (Hear, hear.)

He thought it might be a good idea if slight recompense were made towards the cost of living of those attending high schools. He had no doubt as to the advisability of making the University open to every child of ability in the State. However, the University, as at present constituted was essentially for those taking up a profession, i.e., for those of the more leisured class. Technical and high schools were more needed for the masses than the present University.

To the Hon. A. W. Styles—Witness was in favor of making attendance compulsory every day the schools were open. He thought 15 years should be the lowest age limit for leaving school for the children of any civilized nation. He thought extending it to 14 years would be a suitable temporary step. The Wednesday half-holiday of business was a very disturbing factor in school life.

Mr. Styles (smiling.)—So you would be prepared to support compulsory closing at one o'clock Saturdays?—Yes.

Witness continued that in comparison with what was done in other States South Australia was very generous in the number of exhibitions and bursaries offered.

To Mr. Green.—He thought it would be a good idea to establish some secondary education system whereby young boys, employed by day must compulsorily attend school one or two afternoons a week. Such would also be of advantage to the employer. Money spent on technical education would be well spent. In Switzerland, his own country, as much as 30 to 34 per cent. of the gross revenue was spent on education (including university) in some of the cantons.

To the Chairman—The public schools were as efficient—and even more so—than any outside private schools. He knew of no valid reason why the scholarships offered by the State Department should not be available of by all boys irrespective of whether they attended private or public schools.

The commission will sit again on Friday next when Sir Langdon Bonython president of the School of Mines will be examined.