

ADELAIDE: MONDAY, JULY 6, 1931 IN DEFENCE OF HIGH SCHOOLS

Teachers' Union Statement REPLY TO CRITICS

The following statement was issued on Saturday by the South Australian Public Teachers' Union, through its general secretary (Mr. F. R. Forgan) and is published by arrangement:—

Those engaged in the work of education have learned to view with philosophical tolerance criticism from without. This criticism has often been of the same playful nature as the attacks on politics and other public institutions. One might even admit that, at times, it has been stimulating and, therefore, useful. For the past year or two, however, there has been more serious opposition from prominent citizens and organised bodies and teachers feel that the views expressed are colored too much by one-sided economic and financial considerations.

It is almost as difficult to show by old logic that education does justify its cost as to show that it is a useless luxury in which we are to indulge only when resources are plentiful. Indeed here are many specious arguments or the latter view. If, therefore, the arguments adduced here seem inadequate, we can only say that they are in their essentials, supported by the definite convictions of teachers and responsible educational authorities who are in close contact with schools.

High Schools' Use

Critics do not adopt the extreme view that all education is useless, and therefore, costly at any price. It seems to be generally conceded that State education up to the compulsory age (14 years) is essential, and that the University should receive generous State aid. The period of adolescence which is viewed by educationists as critical, appears to be, in the view of the critics, the only time for which the State should make no provision except perhaps on the lines of technical training. The attack has thus been narrowed down to high schools. Having hit upon this as a branch to be lopped off, critics put forward ill-considered reasons to show how high schools have failed. They think that these exist merely as cramming institutions, preparing for public examinations in unpractical subjects droves of children who were designed by nature to remain ignorant. Teachers claim, however, that public examinations are while important, only one phase of school life. Many who are not bright enough, or do not remain long enough at school to gain much academic distinction, do gain at a high school or college something which they could not gain elsewhere—broader outlook, habits of concentration, improved power of judgment, and stability of character.

The social and sporting activities of school life, in which there is a considerable amount of self-government permitted, are important factors in the development of qualities that go to make better citizens. Such institutions are maintained by the contribution of the students and public-spirited citizens. People in country centres particularly, have supplied large sums for the building and maintenance of high schools.

Chance For Worthy Pupils

Suggestions have been made by most of the critics lately that high schools should be abolished and a bursary system instituted to enable the brightest children to continue. On the other hand, many critics in the past have been fond of asserting that winners of bursaries, more often than not, turn out failures. While not agreeing with this latter view, we maintain strongly that there are many worthy boys and girls who may not win a bursary, but who should be given a chance to continue their studies. These often show marked development at a later age, and, even if they do not, their moderate attainments, aided by fine qualities of character, enable them, when given their opportunity, to compete in life with their brighter rivals. We agree that such a system might lessen the cost, but hold definitely that it would not be efficient or equitable. The curriculum in high schools, which includes literature, science

(practical and theoretical), mathematics, foreign languages, commerce, and (in country centres) agriculture, and to some extent admits of free choice, comes in for criticism both from without and within the educational world. Authorities are not wholly in accord, but they spend much time and thought in reviewing the problem, and may be safely entrusted with the task. The latest authorities are reverting to the view that a general cultural training is safer and more practical than a too exclusive vocational course.

What a babel there would be if all our critics met together in conference to decide the vexed question of a curriculum, and what a mess the result would be! Let us revert now to what is probably the real motive for all this criticism—the financial aspect.

Provision is made in central and technical schools for the utilitarian side of education. The high schools are necessary, not merely as an avenue of approach to the professions, but as centres of culture for the children of the larger section of the community.

Cost Less This Year

True it is that in 1930 high schools cost £104,000. Incidentally the cost will probably be much less this year. It will be remembered that teachers, who were working under a belated arbitration award, voluntarily agreed to a 10 per cent. reduction last October. They realised that the financial position was acute and did not put the Government to the inconvenience of contesting the case in court.

The cost for high schools constitutes one-tenth of the total education vote. For this amount high schools are maintained in the metropolis and country. This compares very favorably with the cost to the Government of one similar institution, the University. Our critics accept with apparent complacency the fact that the University receives £61,000. The School of Mines, too, receives a grant of £23,000. We do not question the wisdom of the Government policy, but we desire to correct the impression that these institutions pay their own way.

The expense of the high schools in Victoria and New South Wales is approximately the same as in South Australia. Victoria charges no fees in the higher elementary schools, but collects a fee from a limited number of the high school students. The amount received as revenue from high schools is one-tenth of the total expenditure of £200,000. The total cost of intermediate high schools and high schools in Victoria is £300,000. Western Australia, in proportion to population, spends much more. The 1930 Year Book gives a table showing the cost per head of population:—New South Wales, 4/1; Victoria, 3/5; Western Australia, 6/1; South Australia, 3/3; Queensland, 2/11 (increasingly rapidly); Tasmania, 1/10.

There is a feeling amongst some interested in private schools that they are at present suffering from the unfair competition of State enterprise in education. This conclusion is not unnatural, but it can hardly be justified. It is well known that the establishment of high schools stimulated interest in secondary education, and thus benefited the private schools. Their present difficulties are the result of financial stringency, and it is difficult to see how they will gain anything from a cut in the education vote. It is safe to say that their numbers would not be appreciably increased if high schools were closed or a fee imposed. These private educational institutions are doing splendid service for the State, and we trust that any of them which are feeling the pinch will soon enjoy a return to prosperity.

Contribution to Progress

There is an uneasy feeling amongst State School teachers that the attitude of the University towards them is not altogether sympathetic. It would be very desirable in the interests of the community if the bonds between our schools and the University could be strengthened. Even if the standard of our work is different, we assure the University that we are heartily in accord with the ideal so admirably expressed lately by Sir William Mitchell in his address to students. The responsibility of the University, he said, by was to make for more perfect development in the character of our citizens, and only so far as it sent out people with definite and well-balanced ideas was it justifying its existence. The University, just as the world, could not progress in so far as it recognised some principle. High schools can justly claim that in this sense they are making a contribution to progress that amply warrants the moderate expense of their maintenance.

On Tuesday evening, at the University, Professor R. W. Chapman will give a public lecture on "The Sydney Bridge."

A private cable has been received that Mr. R. H. G. Taylor, of Adelaide, has gained his degree of D.D.S. with honors at the Toronto University, Canada.

PROFESSOR'S WORK RECOGNISED

Congratulations From School of Mines

The President of the Council of the School of Mines (Sir Langdon Bonython), at a meeting of the council yesterday, said:—

"I have great pleasure, on behalf of the members of the council, in offering Professor Chapman our very hearty congratulations on having received from the University of Melbourne the Kernot Memorial Medal, awarded 'for distinguished engineering achievement in Australia.' In the professor's case it is given for the splendid work which he has done in connection with education in its bearing on civil engineering. He has initiated and developed civil engineering at the Adelaide University, but he has also been associated with important engineering undertakings in the Commonwealth. The members of the council will agree with me when I say that never was honor more thoroughly deserved. Professor Chapman is held in affectionate esteem by all the students who have passed through his hands. By personal contact they have had experience of his innate usefulness and his eager disposition to be of service. As to his great knowledge and rare gifts as an engineer, they have always been recognised. The professor has been so long connected with this school that the members of the council could not fail to realise his worth, and they now rejoice to know that their high opinion is not confined to Adelaide, but is shared by the universities of the other States and by the engineering world generally.

"In this connection I may also mention the additional honor which His Majesty the King has conferred on a former member of this council. I refer to Sir William Bragg, who has been made a member of the Order of Merit—a very great honor, indeed. The number of members in the Order is limited to twenty-four. Only such persons are admitted as have rendered 'exceptionally meritorious service' in navy or army or 'towards the advancement of art, literature, and science.' It is gratifying to know that a former member of this council, who is described in the London 'Daily Mail' as one of the most learned men in England, has been made a member of such a distinguished Order. I sent Sir William Bragg a cablegram conveying our warmest congratulations. "And now I supplement these announcements with a statement which I know will give much satisfaction to the council. It is that the recent birthday honors included a knighthood for Mr. Roy L. Robinson who received the first fellowship given by this school. Mr. Robinson is connected with the Department of Forestry in England and occupies a very important position."

NOT UNANIMOUS

Report of Education Committee

That the report of the education committee presented to the Government was not unanimous was admitted by the Hon. L. L. Hill (Premier) in the Assembly today.

The Premier was replying to Mr. Nicass, who had asked whether the three members of the committee had agreed on their recommendations.

Mr. Hill said that two members had furnished a majority report, and there was also a minority report. He did not indicate which member submitted the minority report.

Mr. Hill told Mr. Anthony that the report was received by the Government yesterday. It would be considered.

In reply to another question by Mr. Nicass the Premier said that he had no doubt whatever that before any drastic alteration was made to the education system parliament would be consulted.

The Government had not yet considered the report, he added.

Mr. B. W. Hone (South Australian Rhodes Scholar for 1929) is proving a great success at Oxford University, says the professor of mathematics at Oxford in a letter to a colleague at the University of Adelaide. He was doing particularly well at cricket, having scored two centuries at the time the letter was sent.

Donne's Influence On Literature

Tracing the influence of John Donne on English poetry, from the time of his death in 1631 to the present, Mr. R. C. Bald, Lecturer in English Literature at the University, pointed out last night that the poet was more famous now than he had been for more than 200 years.

Donne's passionate intensity and forceful style were evident in the works of both Cavalier and Puritan poets during the century following his death. Milton alone escaped. The revival in interest in Donne's work was due partly to its forcefulness and individuality which appealed to a present era of similar unrest. This kinship with the spirit of this age was evident in his influence on the works of Brooke, Sitwell, W. J. Turner, and other modern poets. Donne had been widely read in the Victorian era, but the present generation had a much wider appreciation of the value of his work.

Adv. 9-7-31

The Rev. Canon F. Stanley Poole, who will be 86 today, is one of the best-known clergymen in South Australia. He was born at Maldstone, Kent, England, and had a distinguished career at St. John's College, Cambridge. He came to Adelaide in 1867, having been engaged by the late Bishop Short to fill a mastership at St. Peter's College. As the position had been filled prior to his arrival, however, he joined the ministry. He spent several years in the South-East, and was rector of St. John's Church, Halifax-street, for 21 years. For three years he was rector of St. Peter's, Ballarat, Victoria, and for a considerable period was lecturer in classics at the Adelaide University. He has been chaplain to many Government institutions, and as an educationist his influence has been far-reaching.



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Adv. 10-7-31

State Aid to University From Olivia Brown, Norwood:—In Mr. F. R. Forgan's defence of secondary education, he alluded to the large Government grant to the University. His statement was a surprise to me, and no doubt to many others, who supposed that the University was self-supporting. There appear to be many professional men with little to do. There are almost as many music teachers as pupils, and quite enough lawyers for the State. Why not close the University for, say, three years? It would mean a substantial saving to the country. Stop the flow of the professionally trained, and give those who have spent hundreds of pounds on a university course a better chance to make a living.

Professor Sir Charles Martin, director of the Animal Nutrition Laboratory of the University, was elected a fellow of the Royal Society at a meeting of that body last night.

Adv. 15-7-31

The death occurred yesterday of Mr. Arthur Norton Roupell, of Brownhill Creek, Mitcham, at the age of 42. Mr. Roupell occupied the position of examinations officer to the public service. He was born in Ireland, a son of Captain Roupell, of the Royal Navy, and was educated in England. Entering Cambridge University in 1907, he remained there until 1910, when he took his Bachelor of Arts degree. He received a similar degree at the Adelaide University in 1920. He was later made a Master of Arts, Cambridge (in absentia). Mr. Roupell came to Adelaide in 1911, and was engaged in fruitgrowing at Renmark for two years, after which he settled at Upper Sturt. The 1914 drought compelled him to relinquish fruitgrowing, and he joined the public service in 1915, entering the taxation office, where he remained for three years. On the formation of the Advisory Council of Science and Industry of South Australia, he was appointed secretary, and held that post up to the time of his death. A widow survives.

Adv. 10-7-31

Adv. 14-7-31