

## COST OF EDUCATION

Availing themselves of the winter interregnum in the public school work, the teachers, or a large number of them, are observing the time-honored custom of holding an annual conference, at which the activities, aspirations, and requirements of their profession are discussed from every point of view. Narrowness of outlook was never a charge that could be brought against our teachers, and just as they have an exalted opinion of their calling, and are noted for the zeal and devotion they throw into it, so they may be credited with as large a share of public spirit as any other section of the community. They have heard what has been said of late about the prodigious and growing cost of our educational system, and the need for retrenchment in this, as in other departments of the public service. No one has ever wronged them by the suggestion that theirs is an over-paid profession; rather there is general agreement that the qualities which it demands, and which are widely exhibited, are beyond requital in monetary terms. Properly trained and qualified teachers are far more important from the standpoint of the national future than properly trained men in many other walks of life. But payment implies a payer as well as a recipient, and it is the capacity of the State to meet its obligations out of the resources at present at its command which is now in question.

The teachers would not possess the high degree of intelligence required by their work if they did not see this as clearly as other citizens; and it was no doubt with their full concurrence that Mr. G. Charlesworth, in his inaugural speech as president of the union, intimated their preparedness, as reasonable men and women, to co-operate with the rest of the community in stabilising the finances of the State. The expenditure of the Education Department has been rising steadily year by year, and in 1929 it amounted to £1,088,412, or over £40,000 more than in the previous year. It is right to add that this total includes large amounts, which, properly speaking, have nothing to do with the department, and certainly nothing to do with the schools; for example, annual grants to the University, the Institutes Association, and the Public Library, representing respectively £49,726, £11,488, and £18,823. In addition, the department has the cost of the Observatory thrown upon it. The tendency is always to soar, like the aspiring youth in Longfellow's poem; and it is necessary now to remember that the State no longer wades in an ocean of wealth accruing from borrowed money. As matters are now, expenditure has to be met by raids in the shape of taxation on pockets anything but heavy, and the benefactor of his species is he who can discover new possibilities of saving. In the search, the Education Department was not likely to be overlooked, and it will be surprising if retrenchment stops short at the salaries of teachers and officers, while there is such a field for economy as is afforded by the high schools. Not that there is likely to be any thought of reducing their number, but the question will be asked whether their maintenance is to be solely a charge on the taxpayer. Their beneficiaries should bear portion of the burden. In Victoria a fee of about half-a-crown a week is exacted from the pupils of the high schools, and by this means the State is relieved of the cost of maintenance to the extent of £20,000 a year or more. From a similar impost in this State at least £15,000 a year might be expected, after allowance were made as is done in the neighboring State, for pupils in necessitous circumstances.

The Free High School system was inaugurated in 1908, with the exalted zeal as expressed in the report of the Minister of Education at the time, of

"placing within the reach of all the means by which they may increase their pleasure and power in life." They were described as rungs in the ladder which was to carry every climber who so desired from the elementary school to the University. Except the "leaving" certificate, no qualification is required of children desiring free admission to the high schools. The system emanated largely from those who made a fetish of education, and were fully persuaded that it only needed money enough spent upon it to render it perfect. There are quarters in which the belief may still prevail that, were every normal child to receive a continuous education from the age of five to twenty-five, there would emerge a nation of intellectual aristocrats fit to inhabit Plato's Republic, the assumption, of course, being that, just as in Dogberry's belief reading and writing come by nature, so all children, or nearly all, are naturally capable of assimilating as much instruction on a variety of subjects as the State cares to impart. But, as common experience shows, nature and circumstances have so ordained that those who are capable of absorbing more than a limited amount of knowledge are relatively few, and probably do not greatly exceed the number for whom provision is made by bursaries, exhibitions, and scholarships. For those who can profit by continuous intellectual labor there will never cease to be opportunity. Those who fail to give evidence enough of a taste for scholarship need not be excluded from the high schools, but it may reasonably be required that experiments, having in view the development of such a taste, should be conducted at their own expense, and not that of the taxpayer. This is only one direction in which a move might profitably be made in overhauling our costly educational system without incurring the risk of a lapse into the dark ages. It was a noble impulse which inspired the Labor Government in Britain to propose the raising of compulsory school attendance in Britain to fifteen years, but the consideration of cost stood in the way of this being done during the present year. The need for economy is as imperative here as in the old country. To economise at the expense of primary education might be an example of the false thrift which defeats itself, but higher education is another matter, and—subject to the provision that proved ability does not suffer from the ban of poverty—might well be treated just now as a luxury to be supplied, in whole or part, by the parent.

News 23-8-30  
**UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE**

### STATE DELEGATE RETURNS

#### Important Questions Discussed

Questions of importance dealt with at the biennial conference of the Australian universities held in Sydney this week were forestry courses, admittance of university graduates to the Public Service, and matriculation examinations, stated Prof. J. McKellar Stewart (Hughes Professor of Philosophy at the University of Adelaide) on his return this morning. All proposals discussed will be referred to the universities for decision, he said. Representatives will have the feeling of the conference to guide them in their reports, and in that way the meeting will be of immense benefit. "The question of common forestry courses was considered, the idea being for the universities to work in conjunction with the Federal Forestry Department at Canberra," he continued. "University delegates felt that the doors of the Public Service should be more open to graduates. Separation of the matriculation and leaving examinations was gone into, and the question was left for the universities to decide." Prof. R. W. Chapman (Professor of Engineering at the University of Adelaide), who was the other delegate from this State, will not return until next week. Both representatives will report at an early date to the university council.

## DARLING LABORATORY

### Lord Stovehaven to Open

Invitations have been issued by the University of Adelaide for the official opening of the John Darling laboratory at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute on Tuesday, September 16. The ceremony, which is timed to begin at 11 o'clock in the morning, will be performed by Lord Stovehaven (Governor-General).

Reg 26-8-30  
**DR. CONSTANCE DAVEY**

Dr. Constance Davey, who, last week, was appointed a member of the Programme committee at the Women's Pan-Pacific Conference, is one of the leading educationists of South Australia.



Dr. Constance Davey

Her work in the Education Department for subnormal and abnormal children had done much to solve one of the most difficult problems of the primary schools. Dr. Davey was the second Helen Spence scholar at Adelaide University, and when studying child psychology abroad included in her itinerary work with delinquent children in the United States.

Before going abroad to study, Dr. Davey was for several years a senior teacher at St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School.

Reg 26-8-30  
**Prof. Gregory Tells How World Finance Affects Employment**

Unstable money, which worked its effect through the redistribution of income, was a most powerful solvent of the social fabric, declared Prof. T. E. Gregory, of Sir Otto Niemeyer's mission, delivering the Fisher lecture in the Brookman Hall last night.

So many people wanted to hear the lecture that the hall was not able to hold them, and many were turned away.

If instability was pushed to extremes, said Prof. Gregory, of either inflation or deflation, it destroyed the production system. A period of inflation would destroy all savings and the workers' standard of life, as wages were paid in terms of money.

But a period of deflation destroyed business men's chances of success and enormously increased unemployment, since no business man would go on producing if the value of what he produced kept falling.

Which was the worse was a problem, but if he had to choose between them, he would

Adv. 26-8-30  
**JOSEPH FISHER LECTURE**

### PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCE

#### PROFESSOR GREGORY SPEAKS

The Brookman Hall at the School of Mines was not large enough to hold all who wished to hear Professor T. E. Gregory, of the London University, lecture on "Some Current Problems of International Finance" last night, and many were turned away.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University (Sir William Mitchell) was in the chair, and those on the platform included Mr. Justice Angus Parsons (Warden of the Senate), Professor Melville, Sir Herbert Phillips, Messrs. W. J. Young and T. E. Barr Smith. Lady Hore-Ruthven was among those in the audience.

Sir William Mitchell said that many eminent men had honored the University and the name of Mr. Fisher by coming to Adelaide and delivering the Joseph Fisher lecture on commerce, but in Professor Gregory they had one of the most distinguished of them all. (Applause.)

Reg 26-8-30  
**MATRICULATION BY EXAM. OR MASTER'S CERTIFICATE?**

### S.A. Proposal Discussed By Universities' Conference

MELBOURNE, Monday.—Support for the system of matriculation by Headmasters' certificate was contained in a report submitted by the University of Melbourne to the Universities' Conference held in Sydney last week. The report revealed that an enquiry conducted in Melbourne had shown that students who matriculated under the system of Headmasters' certificates had done better at the Universities than those who matriculated by public examination.

The Registrar of the Melbourne University (Mr. J. P. Bainbridge), who attended the conference, said today that the report was not a condemnation of the public examination system.

A scheme bearing on the subject of public examinations had been put forward by the University of Adelaide, which proposed that Universities should not conduct examinations for students who did not intend to enter Universities on matriculation.

If that proposal were adopted, University examinations for matriculation would be a test of intellect rather than of acquisition of knowledge. The proposal was discussed by the conference, and referred to individual Universities.

Reports from several Universities were submitted, dealing with the taking on to the administrative staffs of both Commonwealth and State Civil Services of University graduates. The Pro-Chancellor of the Sydney University (Sir Munro McCallum), Sir John Monash, and the Vice-Chancellor of the Adelaide University (Sir Wm. Mitchell) were appointed to watch the matter in the interests of University graduates.

It was recommended that no University should award degrees in Forestry unless training had been completed at the School of Forestry at Canberra. It was decided that the matter should be the subject of a further conference with the Canberra School representatives.

#### Stability of Money Values

Professor Gregory said that all modern business was based on the assumption that money had a certain stability of value—that it would purchase a fixed quantity of goods over a certain time. If the value of their money symbols altered much over a space of time, all business became simply a gamble as to the future value of money. In the past 15 years the purchasing power of money had first fallen (between 1914 and 1922) and then risen (between 1922 and 1930). Any alteration in the purchasing power of money upset the price level and the equilibrium of the social system. Unstable money was a most powerful solvent of the social fabric, and it was also among the most neglected until recently. It worked its effect through the redistribution of income, and if instability was pushed to extremes, either of inflation or deflation, it destroyed the productive system. A period of inflation would destroy all savings and the workers' standard of life, as wages were paid in terms of money; but a period of deflation destroyed business men's chances of success and enormously increased unemployment, since no business man would go on producing if the value of what he produced was continually falling. It was difficult to say which was the worse, but if he had to choose between them he would choose deflation, because it did not destroy "intangibles" to the same extent as inflation.

#### Wall-street Boom and Crash

Why was international finance in such a difficult position to-day? What was wrong with it? the lecturer asked.