

The Advertiser

ADELAIDE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1930

DENTAL TRAINING

Thanks to those agents for the production of unconsciousness to pain, the discovery of which Alfred Russel Wallace has rightly described as more far-reaching in its beneficial consequences to mankind than any other gain of the past century, the dentist's chair, like the surgeon's table, has lost its terrors. Immeasurable progress, too, has been made in the practice of dentistry since it was customary for the barber or blacksmith to combine its pursuit with his own. But if suffering humanity is to enjoy all the advantage it is entitled to expect from anaesthetics, and the growth of odontological knowledge, it is plainly necessary that the operator should bring to his task the maximum of skill and technical training. It is to this end that the State has equipped and maintains the Dental Hospital and subsidises the training of students in dental science at the University, and also defrays the cost of training certain students to serve as school dentists when qualified. Altogether, the facilities provided in South Australia are such as to enable students of the craft to obtain as sound a theoretical and practical training as may be acquired in any other part of the world.

Not unnaturally, therefore, the question is asked by the Dental Board, the University authorities, the local branch of the British Medical Association, and registered dentists generally, what justification there can be for the Bill to amend the Dentists Act which Mr. H. Tassie has introduced into the Legislative Council. The Bill runs directly counter to the objects contemplated in conferring on the profession the status it now enjoys. It proposes, inter alia, to admit to registration as duly qualified dentists operative dental assistants who have been in practice at least seven years, after passing a viva voce and practical examination in operative and prosthetic dentistry by examiners appointed by the Dental Board. There are some fifteen assistants who hope to benefit by the suggested amendment of the Act. The Bill provides for the repeal two years after its enactment of sub-sections of the Act of 1902, allowing the employment as assistants of men not fully qualified, the idea being to have their places filled by regular students in the same way as hospitals are attended by students in the medical profession. The 1902 Act has been more than once amended in the interest of practitioners not fully qualified, and the question at once arises when is finality to be reached? It was thought to have been attained in 1917 when operative assistants, especially those whose studies were interrupted by service in the war, were admitted to registration on easier terms than the Act originally contemplated; and easier terms certainly than were granted to soldiers seeking admission to the Bar, who, though having the period for serving their articles abbreviated, were compelled to complete their academic course. The question is whether the law should be amended for the sake of assistant dentists who have had thirteen years to qualify in the usual way and have neglected for one cause or another to do so. Either they might have taken the five years' course at the University or the Dental Board course, which does not require attendance at the Dental Hospital, and may be passed without interfering with the avocation of the assistants. It is objected that to grant them cheaper terms of admission than are exacted from regular students would be unfair to the latter, and at the same time injurious to the standards of a profession in which efficiency is now recognised as often a matter of literally vital importance. It is to be noted also that the benefits of the Bill are applicable to any but those who

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have served seven years in operative dentistry, and as the places they now fill are to be occupied by others the effect will be to deprive many assistants of their present livelihood, unless, indeed, they in turn are to be subject to a special Bill to redress the flagrant wrong which would be done to them.

Adv. 27-10-30
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
GROUP STUDY SYSTEM

Favored by Sir W. Mitchell

How the Workers' Educational Association might be utilised in an attempt to solve the economic problems of the time was indicated in an address by Sir William Mitchell at the annual break-up of students of the association on Saturday night.

Sir William congratulated the association on its successful year despite the bad times. The group system of study, as conducted by the association, was extremely important. The original purpose of the association, he thought, was not to increase personal efficiency, but to provide occupation for leisure. It would be a good idea to form a group of students of the association to consider the economic position of South Australia. Experts on special subjects could be asked to attend and explain questions.



The group might set to answer the question, "What will be the position of the State five years hence?" They could discuss questions of importance affecting the community, and arrive at some conclusion. The results perhaps could be embodied in a book. They could discuss the parlous condition of the wheat market, the agricultural system, the competition of artificial wool, transport, and the bearing of municipal control on social and industrial life.

The gathering was held at Stow Hall, Flinders-street, and the president of the association (Mr. E. R. Dawes, M.P.) was in the chair, and addresses were delivered by Mr. A. G. Price, Professor H. J. Wilkinson, and the acting director of the tutorial classes (Mr. E. J. Biagini). Songs were contributed by Mr. L. J. Crisp, violin solos by Mr. I. G. Pritchard, and elocutionary items by Miss Effie Horsfall.

Reg. 28-10-30
DENTISTS OPPOSE CHANGE
IN DENTAL ACT

Attempt To Camouflage Real Objective, They Say

Opposition to the Bill introduced to the Legislative Council by Mr. Tassie (Lib.) to alter the constitution of the Dental Board and the procedure for registration of operative assistants, was announced yesterday by both the Dental Board and Dental Association.

"The feeling of the majority of the Board is that the time is not opportune for any alteration in its constitution," said the President (Sir Wallace Bruce) after a meeting of the board yesterday.

"The Board is unanimously opposed to the amendment giving certain rights of registration to operative assistants. Should the Government consider amending legislation necessary, we feel that we are the body best fitted to frame it."

90 p.e. AGAINST CHANGE
During the meeting a letter was received from the President of the Dental Association (Mr. A. P. R. Moore), who said that the opinion of the council of the association was that the proposal contained in the Bill had been put forward to make the real object of the bill (the registration of untrained and unqualified men) appear of minor importance. The opinion of Mr. Tassie that the board and the majority of dentists desired the change was contrary to fact. A plebiscite of the Dental Association (120 members) showed that 90 per cent. wished the Dental Act to remain unaltered.

DENTAL ACT

REPLY TO MR. ALFORD

Statement by Association

On behalf of the council of the South Australian branch of the Australian Dental Association, Dr. A. P. R. Moore (president) today made the following statement in reply to Mr. F. S. Alford, who in "The News" on Thursday last stated the case for the Operative Dental Assistants' Association:—

"Mr. Alford said that it was nothing short of a scandal that the public should be asked to countenance an Act which made it possible for dentists to train and employ operative assistants to do all the work of dentistry.

"To any intelligent person it must appear most amazingly inconsistent to find an operative assistant thus blatantly condemning the system by which he claims to have become so proficient, that it is not necessary for him to have to sit for a rational examination in all (he emphasised the "all") branches of dental science before being admitted to the register as a qualified practitioner.

"If Mr. Alford and his associates are genuinely concerned on behalf of the public and realise the 'scandalous defects' in the aforementioned clause of our Dental Act, why have they made no attempt during the many years of their relationship with the public to improve themselves by undertaking the Dental Board course of study, which can be, and in practically every case has been, accomplished while the student earns his own living.

"If the public has suffered it has been at the hands of operative assistants. Yet in view of their claims concerning their proficiency this scarcely seems possible.

LEGAL STATUS

"No dentist employing an operative assistant would be foolish enough to prejudice the goodwill of his patients by permitting that assistant to perform an operation until he knew he was competent to do so. Further, the dentist is legally responsible for the actions of his assistant. We may therefore judge the extent of any possibility of an injustice to the public.

"The injustice to the public will begin when operative assistants are given the same legal status as those under whose supervision they now work without first having given adequate evidence of their capability to assume the responsibilities imposed by such a position.

"The purely practical examination mentioned in the Bill presented to the Legislative Council by the Hon. H. Tassie is as follows:—'It shall comply with regulations made by the Governor on October 18, 1905. Regulations made on March 26, 1908, shall not apply to such examination.'

"Even since 1908 the Dental Act has been amended twice. Yet, in spite of this, it was stated in the Legislative Council that the examination is to be identical with that given to final year dental students who do the modern orthodox course of training.

"If the original statement of Mr. Alford is correct, it is strange that public bodies and members of the laity themselves have not made any protest. No such complaints have ever been received from these long-suffering ranks of humanity.

"POLITICAL INFLUENCE"

"The complaint on behalf of the public comes from dental assistants who seem to have acquired sufficient political influence to use this absurd suggestion as a loophole, by way of which they aspire to become dentists without fulfilling the conditions which our legislators have believed essential for more than two decades in order that public health may be adequately safeguarded.

"Referring to the examination Mr. Alford says:—'If they could not pass they would accept the situation and lose their livelihood.'

"He knows very well that when a similar examination (for which there may then have been some slight justification) was conducted following the 1917 amendment of the Dental Act, 46 of the 47 candidates passed, and a special additional amendment of the Dental Act was approved by Parliament in 1921 to register without any examination at all the one solitary remaining assistant; and the members of the profession were assured that the Act had been definitely and irrevocably closed, and so, actually, it had been.

"DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND"

"No responsible dental or educational organisation wishes it altered in the unfair manner now suggested by a few operative assistants and their political friends in the Legislative Council. Mr. Alford (an operative dental assistant) says that the proposed step is not retrogressive, yet distinguished men representing the University of Adelaide, British Medical Association, Dental Board, Australian Dental Association, and registered dentists not

members of the association, have signed a letter which was sent in August of last year to Mr. Tassie (then Chief Secretary) and which stated:—

"The proposal of the Government to introduce legislation providing for the registration (subject to passing of a modified examination) of certain operative assistants is considered by us to be a distinctly retrograde step and very undesirable. . . ."

"That the opinion of the bodies mentioned is exactly the same today as a year ago, and that they have in no way been approached for advice concerning the amendment introduced by Mr. Tassie, which is worse now than formerly, makes it most difficult for mere dentists to understand the ways of our statesmen, who are fostering the unholy rights, not of all, but of a select group of operative assistants with seven years experience as such; although the legal and moral rights of all operative assistants are absolutely identical.

"The closing statement of Mr. Alford that the majority of the dentists endorse the measure is absurd and incorrect.

"Concerning the proposal to delete the clause in the Dental Act which permits a dentist to employ an assistant, I should like to state that no evidence has been produced to demonstrate that this practice is inimical to public or professional interests; and if it is, surely responsible bodies must emphatically protest against the inimical assistants being granted the privilege of registration as dentists until they have passed not a modified examination but one identical with that for which an ordinary student sits who is entering the profession in the manner required by the law.

"If legislators believe that the operative assistant clause should be deleted the most just and rational method for overcoming the difficulty would be as follows:—Those now employed as operative assistants could be registered as such, and the ranks closed—a similar arrangement proved satisfactory in the case of young women employed in hotel bars.

"In this way no possible injustice would be done to anyone. Assistants who wished to become registered could go about it in the correct manner, and those less ambitious or with less ability would not be deprived of that means of livelihood which is legally theirs.

"Further, many dentists have assistants who do only trivial operations, such as polishing fillings or relieving dentures. These assistants (in many cases young women) do not wish to become registered, nor is it necessary that they should do so. Dentists have, according to law, a perfect right to retain the services of such valuable assistants, and we can safely leave it to the Dental Board to make the necessary recommendations should the system be abused."

Adv. 28-10-30
DENTISTS ACTS

Opposition to Proposed Changes

PLEBISCITE OF PRACTITIONERS

Both the Dental Board and the council of the Dental Association are opposed to certain changes proposed by the Bill introduced in the Legislative Council by Mr. H. Tassie to amend the Dentists Acts.

After a meeting of the Dental Board yesterday, the president (Sir Wallace Bruce) said that the board was unanimously opposed to that section which dealt with the registration of operative dental assistants in the manner suggested. However, should the Government consider amending legislation necessary the board felt that it was the body best fitted to frame it. The feeling of the majority of the board was that the time was not opportune for any alteration in its constitution.

During the meeting a letter from the president of the S.A. Dental Association (Mr. A. P. R. Moore) was read. It stated that the opinion of the council of the association was that the proposal contained in the Bill had been put forward to make the real object of the Bill (i.e., the registration of untrained and unqualified men) appear of minor importance. The opinion that the board and the majority of dentists desired the change was in no way official, and indeed was contrary to fact. A plebiscite of the Dental Association (120 members) showed that 90 per cent. wished the Dental Act to remain unaltered. The council felt that South Australia could not do better than follow British tradition in dental board matters, and retain a type of board which had proved workable and efficient in every respect.