

NEW EDUCATION REGULATION.

Adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. GILES—"That so much of the new education regulation (see Parliamentary paper No. 22, House No. 10) as relates to fees after passing the compulsory standard, be disallowed." In 1893 he moved a motion raising the fees from 6d. to 1s. per week for children over the age of 13 who had passed the standard and were attending the public schools. He brought the motion forward on August 23, 1893, and it was not carried until November 15, 1893. Now without consulting Parliament at all, and without one petition against the change then made, the Government had made another alteration in the educational system. The expenditure on fees was not very great, but his motion of 1893 had a good effect in preventing the overcrowding of schools. He regretted that the Minister of Education should have said that this small charge prevented the children from passing the compulsory standard when they were able to do so. He believed that was a libel on the parents. There might be a few cases where children had not passed when they might, but he did not believe that the payment of 1s. a week could to any extent have had that effect. It might have been used in some cases as a convenient excuse for fewer children passing the standard. The number who had passed was exceedingly large, and he did not believe that the Minister of Education could prove that the proportion of successful scholars is any less now than when the motion was carried in 1893. The new regulation of the Government would become law by simply lying on the table of the House for a month, and it was just a month to-day since it was tabled, and the House had hitherto had no chance to say a word in the matter. (The Attorney-General—"We promise to give effect to whatever is the will of the House.") Yes, but it would now be necessary to undo a law which had been brought into effect without any consent from Parliament, and the majority of the House were bound by their pledges to vote against what the Ministry had done. A strong minority of our people considered our educational system unjust. They were being wronged, and the Government was now still further wronging them without even obtaining the consent of the House. He believed every member of the Government was pledged against the alteration, because if they gave any pledge at all it was in favor of a grant to all private schools. No doubt those who used the public schools obtained a good return for the burden of taxation expended on education, but how about the large minority who got nothing at all? They were taxed for the public education, and they had to send their children to private schools. He believed that education in morals was necessary as well as education in letters. A child who had passed high without moral training was rather a danger to the State than a benefit. We constantly heard of clever lads robbing tills and altering signatures till they got into prison. Our real want was moral character, and would this alteration raise the moral standard among our State school children? He did not think it a good thing for children to go to a Government school free and see other children going to another school and paying for it. The great moral law was "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you," and was our State educational system in accord with that law? If it was not, then we were educating our children against the moral law. He had great sympathy for the parents of the 12,000 children educated in private schools, and in spite of what had been said that afternoon many of the parents of the latter were far poorer than the parents of those children who attend State schools. Numbers of the people whose children go to Prince Alfred College were just about as poor as could be, but they sent their children there on account of the

moral training. Some of the best boys at Prince Alfred's had gone there free from Government schools, and he knew of lads at the University who had got their education free the whole way up. It was not, however, the children of the really poor who could do this sort of thing, but the children of well-to-do people who could attend the State schools regularly and for a long time and so secured the bursaries. (The Treasurer—"They say for it in taxation.") Yes, but there were the parents of the 12,000 outside children. The Treasurer came into the House on the lines of a grant to private schools. The time would come when the present Ministry would be in a minority on this subject, for injustice did not rule always, and the time would come when people would see that they are bound by the golden rule. Nearly all our public schools were overcrowded both in town and country. He had heard the city members complain that the schools were crowded. Certainly the country schools were overcrowded, and to keep down the cost of education the Government had to employ monitors and girls to carry on the work. The country schools were altogether undermanned, and the Government knew in their hearts that the system was too expensive. A few years ago the Government built iron schools in the country, and in the hot summer months existence in these was unbearable, both for teachers and children. The Government went on increasing the cost of education, and why did they refuse to do justice to private schools? The Minister of Education a few years ago stated that the cost of education should be reduced by increasing the higher fees, but now he had turned round on the other tack. They were told that they must not interfere with this grand national system, but until the 12,000 children who were being educated at the private schools were examined and passed under Government examiners the system could scarcely be called national. They should insist upon the true principles of religion being taught in the schools, and while members twisted him with being against the poor in the matter of education he denied that. What he was against was the injustice which was done to those who were just as poor as the persons members had in their minds. People who had conscientious scruples in connection with the education of their children should have them respected by the Government. In bygone times how many went and were willing to go to the stake to suffer tortures rather than give up what their conscience told them was sacred and right. Many of the teachers, who were men of talent and were doing their best to have the children well taught, were underpaid; indeed they received miserable pittance on which they could not live. Even if they sat late a best division ought to be taken on this important question. He objected to the Government taking the power of ruling the country out of the hands of the Parliament.

(The Treasurer—"Parliament does not make regulations. That is the work of the Government.") Where a regulation altered the direct vote of the House it was surely abrogating the functions of Parliament. (The Treasurer—"This regulation is laid before the House for approval.") The regulations were not laid on the table until such time as the crowded state of the notice-paper prevented him from submitting a motion dealing with them to the House before now. The Government had no right to take the law into their own hands without consulting the Legislature, and his motion protested against this unwarranted action.

The MINISTER of EDUCATION said the Government was ready to take a division on this question that day. The regulation was laid on the table the first day of the session, and the Government, through the Premier, promised the House that whatever decision was arrived at by members it would be respected by the Ministry. If country members wished to do away with higher education in their districts they must support Mr. Giles. Although in 1893 he favored increasing the fees he now found that that was a mistaken policy. The number of children who would remain in the fifth class on the abolition of the fees would be in round numbers about 1,000. They would be spread over 200 schools, instead of the 40 or 50 schools prior to the abolition of the fees, and the Government felt justified, after evidence had been given then of the way this regulation was operating, in asking the House to remove it. Mr. Giles complained of the overcrowded state of the city and country schools. In some of the schools they certainly wanted increased accommodation, but in places like Woodville and Kilkenny there was enough room, while in parts of the country, owing to the drought and other adversities, some of the schools had to be closed. The board of inspectors had addressed the following communication to him at the beginning of the year:—"The reason for raising this question now is found in the fact that the inspectors as a body have strong ground for believing that many children purposely fail either in spelling or arithmetic so as to avoid promotion to class v. and the payment of the fee. So strongly do the inspectors feel on this matter that they have urged on the board the necessity for taking action to prevent (1) the parents of children from withdrawing them from examination; (2) and the children themselves from being parties to a dishonorable action, one which is demoralising in itself, and which has very injurious effects on the schools and the teachers. The attention of the board has more particularly been called to the importance of this question by a letter from one of the inspectors, in which he makes the astounding statement that 'out of 24 children on the roll of the fourth class, 14 were absent from the examination. The teacher informed him that they were kept away by the parents, who feared the children would gain the compulsory certificate, and then have to pay the 1s. a week. The teacher stated that they were the best 14 of the class, and that he had used his influence for the sake of his percentage to secure their attendance.' Inspector Neale in his report stated:—"Last year I referred somewhat hesitatingly to the effects of the Parliamentary resolution to charge a shilling a week for the instruction in the fifth class of those children who had passed the compulsory standard. I wish again to disclaim any intention to discuss the policy of Parliament in this matter, but in the further light of this year's experience it is no less than a duty to report how, in practice, not only are the wishes of Parliament frustrated, but a very evil influence has been introduced into the schools, against which the teachers and officers of the department are alike helpless. The charge of a shilling a week was imposed partly to raise revenue in the larger schools and partly to make a fifth class possible in the country schools. The parents evade the payment in two ways, either by keeping the children at home from the examination in the fourth class or by telling them to fail in one of the compulsory subjects. I have reported specific cases where this has been done. In one school all the best children of class iv. were kept away for this reason, and the percentage suffered accordingly. This is demoralising to the children and disheartening to the teacher. It might be said that a teacher should checkmate the practice by refusing to promote such children to the fifth class; but no teacher would dare to enter upon such a crusade against local opinion, to say nothing of the immorality of wasting the children's precious time. Nor does this charge of a shilling a week accomplish the object of establishing fifth classes in country schools. On the other hand it has had the effect of practically abolishing them. Many a teacher would form a fifth class but for this fee. The people will not or cannot pay it; as soon as a fifth class is formed a few eligible pupils leave, and the average attendance drops, possibly just enough to reduce the classification of the school and consequently the salary. The teacher can thus hardly be blamed for failing to voluntarily undertake extra work when it may mean a reduction of £20 or £30 a year in his salary." Inspector Plummer made the appended statement in his report:—"During the past year I have visited many schools with the attendance about 100, and have been struck with the small number of pupils in the fifth class. The same answer is received in all places. The parents are unable or unwilling to pay the 1s. per week. The charge was made with a view of benefiting the pupils in the country schools, but it has had an effect contrary to the intention. If the Board of Inspectors can do anything to get this fee taken off, which is now a tax on the smart children—not necessarily the rich ones—I think a great benefit would be conferred on many of your schools. At present many teachers are unwilling to form fifth classes, as they fear that such a step would lessen their average attendance, feeling that a few would pay the 1s. per week—the majority would not do so. The schools that occur to me just now as suffering under this matter are Georgetown, Port Broughton, Caltowie, Gladstone, and Redhill, while Solomontown, Port Pirie, Laura, Jamestown, Burra, and Riverton lose many of their scholars when they have gained their compulsory certificates." While it had been possible to establish the fifth class in the city schools it had not in the country, and members knew they had many times been asked to get them for their own districts. He had been thanked for his action in abolishing the fees by two parents of large families in his own district, who were of the same political opinions as Mr. Giles. Mr. Giles talked about religion, and said that teachers in private schools looked after the moral training of the children better than the State school teachers. He did not believe that, and he would read to the House two regulations framed by Mr. Hartley. The first was as follows:—"The object of the educational

system is to develop the intellectual, moral, and physical powers of the children. It is not sufficient merely to give instruction, but the aim of every teacher should be to train his pupils in habits of cleanliness, industry, punctuality, obedience, truthfulness, honesty, and consideration for others. The discipline of each school should be based on the strictest justice in the relations between master and scholars as well as between the scholars themselves; and all teachers should remember that their own example exerts its most powerful influence in mould-

ing the characters of their pupils." That was quite as high a standard as Mr. Giles could set his children. Regulation 102 says:—"Lessons on the elementary principles of morality are to be given in all schools. These lessons will enforce the necessity of cleanliness, punctuality, industry, obedience, honesty, respect, and consideration for others. Special attention will also be given to the question of temperance. The higher classes will receive instruction in the ordinary duties of a citizen." So that without encroaching on the disputed question of religion the children in State schools were well trained morally as well as intellectually. In 1887 instructions were sent out by the Department that all schools with an average attendance of over 100 should have a fifth class. Directly the Government decided to abolish the fees he issued instructions that the fifth class should be established in all schools with an attendance of over 40. (Mr. Darling—"How long ago was that?") On June 23. He felt that now was the chance to give children in the country districts higher education than they had in the past. He would give some figures relating to electoral districts to show how the alteration would affect country schools. In Wallaroo there were formerly three schools with a fifth class; now there were eight. Of course Wallaroo was a large centre, and was not so much affected as some of the more sparsely populated districts. In West Torrens there were formerly five, now eight. In Yatala formerly one, now five, and he might say that Mr. J. P. Swan, the chairman of the Salisbury Board of Advice, who had had long experience in that position, had warmly commended the action of the Government, and he was by no means a Radical. In Gumeracha there was formerly one, now nine schools with a fifth class. In East Torrens the increase was from 7 to 9; in Sturt from 6 to 7; in Noarlunga, 3 to 10; Mount Barker, 4 to 12; Onkaparinga, 4 to 12; Encounter Bay, 2 to 5; Barossa, 3 to 8; Light, 2 to 9; Yorke's Peninsula, 1 to 7; Victoria, none to 6; Albert, 7 to 14; Burra, 3 to 8; Stanley, 1 to 10; Wooreroo, 4 to 9; Gladstone, 5 to 9; Frome, 3 to 15—12 classes in Mr. Giles's own district which he was doing his best to knock out—in Newcastle 4 to 11, and in Flinders 2 to 7. Altogether 125 more schools—nearly all in the country districts—would get the fifth class. (Mr. Grainger—"How many will there be in a fifth class out of 40 scholars?") If there were only half a dozen it was worth doing. There were formerly only 73 schools with a fifth class in the districts where the 125 were to be opened, and 18 of those were practically in the suburbs. (Mr. Giles—"What is the increase of teachers?") None, except an extra monitor or pupil teacher in one or two instances. (Mr. Darling—"What is the increased expenditure?") If it was £1,000 the House was going to endorse it. He had a report from the chairman of the Board of Inspectors on that subject, which said:—"The income received until recently for fifth class fees was in round numbers at the rate of £1,800 a year, which means 900 paying pupils taught in class v. There would perhaps be 600 more who, for the reason that they did not hold a compulsory certificate or were under 13 years of age, would not be paying fees. Thus there would be, say, 1,500 fifth class children. I do not think the extension of the fifth class to all schools of over 40 average will add more than 1,000 to the number of fifth class children. This does not mean that the average will be raised now by 1,000, because many of them would still stay at school after passing the fourth class, even although they did not receive fifth class teaching. The new departure may perhaps increase the attendance by 500, and this spread over more than 100 schools, means five more at each of them. It is possible that in 25 of these the average attendance may be so raised that the teachers' salaries would (under the regulations) be increased by £10 for the first year, £20 for the second, and £30 for the third. This would swell the expenditure on salaries by £250 for the first year, £500 for the second, and £750 for the third. Besides salaries there would be other slight expenses incurred, chiefly for an additional monitor in some places, but they are hardly worth estimating. These are my own personal views only, because I have had no opportunity of conferring with my colleagues on the board." Our educational system was far more valuable in the country than in the city, because another system would practically reach all the children in the larger schools, while if we were to abolish the present system it would mean that at least 300 schools in the country would be absolutely closed. The country three or four years ago had been asked to vote on the question raised by Mr. Giles, and they spoke distinctly in favor of the present system. He was going to show the difference in the cost of education in the city and country. He had a return which showed that in 206 of the smallest (country) schools there were 2,902 children who cost £5 1s. 6d. per head per annum in salaries paid to teachers, and not including rent on extras for fuel, &c., while in three of the largest town schools 3,074 children cost £1 18s. per head per annum. Country members should support the Government in this matter, because it was their duty to do all they could for those who went out into the wilds of the colony to develop our resources, and he was satisfied that a majority of the House agreed with him. Mr. Glynn had said that he did not think that the poorer classes were entitled to higher education at the cost of the State, but he did not think that the fifth class subjects could be called higher education. He would read them. They were:—Reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, history, composition, poetry, drawing, singing, drill, manual work, and needlework (for girls). All these subjects were taught in the second class and upwards. (Mr. Glynn—"Is that all they teach?") That list was drawn up by the chairman of the Board of Inspectors. (Mr. Glynn—"You have given one part of the curriculum and not the other." Mr. Burgoyne—"They ought to have that in the fourth class.") It was extended in the fifth class. If the children in the city were getting an advantage out of the regulations it was the duty of the Government to see that

those in the country were put in the same position. He hoped the House would by a large majority endorse the action of the Government.

Mr. HAGUE agreed with what Mr. Giles had said but differed from him in the most important part of his speech and the resolution he had proposed. He was an opponent of free education for various reasons, and he would give one of them. A large number of his constituents were Germans, who had built their own schools and paid their own schoolmasters. They had always felt it a considerable injustice to have to support their own schools while they could not conscientiously avail themselves of the use of the public schools. He recognized now that free education had come to stay, and they must make the system as perfect as possible. He did not see much to object to in what the Minister of Education had done, seeing that he had such very strong reports from the inspectors in favor of making the alteration, but he objected to the way it was done. The Minister thought it was an easy way of rescinding the regulation, but he had done more than that. He had an objection to the charge after a child reached 13 years of age or passed the compulsory standard. Very often a boy could not readily obtain employment, and if the parents were unwilling or unable to pay the fee of 1s. a week he drifted about the street, and the result was most detrimental to the moral character of the children. (Mr. Homburg—"What is the position when he is out of the fifth class?") If he could remain at school he would have an opportunity of employing his time usefully. At first he had partly committed himself to Mr. Giles, but now he would have to vote with the Government.

Mr. GLYNN said he recognized the principle of free education was in force and would be sorry now that it had obtained such dimensions to take a stand that he might have taken earlier. They must recognize what was in existence, though if he had been in the House at the very inception of the educational system he might have defended private enterprise against the colonial system of the Government. They had schools now in a great state of efficiency, and he would be sorry to bring about a complete disruption of the system. They had recognized the system only after a long battle, in which the Opposition raised a number of reasonable opinions. That recognition was given by Act of Parliament, and when the Government stepped in in 1891 they did not take over the power to make regulations nor the power to rescind them, but the Government had exercised a power over regulations which were submitted to the House to judge of their reasonableness. It was now proposed to extend that power of rescinding regulations without getting the seriously expressed opinion of the House, and the House was asked to approve of that. The regulations were not submitted to the House to give them validity and law. That was postponed until the House had had an opportunity of judging of the adequacy or inadequacy, the reasonableness or the unreasonableness of them. Was the power to repeal a law vested by Act in the Government? They framed regulations, and in order to prevent an unreasonable regulation being passed it did not have the force of law for a month. But when they came to the larger matter of completely changing the law he said the Government were usurping the functions of the House in repealing a regulation of this sort. He thought that was the feeling of the House. The regulations were only submitted to test their reasonableness. It was the same way with their regulations under other Acts, the Local Courts Act for instance. The Ministry were arrogating to themselves a power not given to them by the House. They took the position that they had power to cancel the whole law itself by bringing in regulations. Since the repeal of the regulation there had been a large increase in fifth classes, so that the Government were forcing their hands in the matter. They had put the law into force before

they had taken the opinion of the House as to the change, and in the meantime a new system under the repealed law had grown up. The consequence was that to a large extent their judgment was tied by circumstances, and the result would be that six or seven members would give their vote the other way. (The Treasurer—"It has not been in force six weeks.") It was in force before Parliament met. (The Treasurer—"No. From July 1.") He had asked for the date, but had not got it. He had shown the position the Government had taken. A certain amount of inconvenience would result by insisting on the discontinuance of this regulation. From another point of view they ought not to greatly extend this principle. There was a great deal of force in what Mr. Wood said, that the poorer classes would not get much benefit from the repeal of the regulation. The Minister of Education had only cited one branch of the curriculum. He spoke of geography, but under that heading there were such subjects as composition of the atmosphere, physical geography, the moon and the planets, subjects of an abstruse character. He wanted to show that only a little was done in the fifth class. The cost of the education system was £140,000 a year. (Mr. Scherk—"Less than all the other colonies.") He did not think so, but did not want to be too positive. He had the figures, and he thought Mr. Scherk would find that the cost was not less than the cost in all the other colonies. It was less than some and more than others. Of the amount he had given £135,000 was the general cost, and then there was an annual expenditure of £5,000 for repairs to buildings, leaving the interest on buildings out of account. Then there was a grant on lands, which accounted for £5,000 a year. Now they were going to add a bonus of something like £5,000 a year on to that. (The Attorney-General—"The endowment goes into the revenue." Mr. Hobbie—"£125,000 covers all the cost.") He was wrong, then, to the extent of £5,700, but he thought the interest on buildings might be divided by two and added to the cost, because if the buildings in the country were sold they would not fetch the amount they were valued at. That would counterbalance the fact that he had made a mistake in including the £5,700 in the estimate. The Minister of Education had cited two inspectors, Inspector Neale and Plummer. Inspector Neale was quite as emphatic in 1893, and why was the regulation not repealed then? In 1893 the inspector drew attention to the inconvenience of charging fifth classes, and said the children did not present themselves for examination in order to escape the fee. The Minister of Education should have introduced a system then to repeal the regulation, and he should have given members an opportunity of