

the appointment of inspectors. They should not all be taken from the highest men. There should be a fair percentage of the younger men among the inspectors. That would give greater hope and a bigger impetus to all in the service to progress and win promotion. He considered that the Director of Education should be the Secretary to the Minister. At present the Director had to get permission from the Secretary to the Minister to go to see the Minister.

The Premier—No, no.

Mr. Ryan—Yes, yes. Here are Mr. Stanton's own words on it. (Laughter.)

The Premier—Then it has been altered since he said it. (Laughter.)

Mr. Ryan stated that if that were so it had been altered without legislative authority.

The Premier—There was no legislative authority for it.

Mr. Peake—There has never been a time when the Director or his Secretary has not been able to see the Minister when they so desired.

Mr. Ryan said he was very glad to hear it. Regarding the technical schools, he said it was impossible to have a great system of technical education, to reach through all the State schools, unless it were under the direct control of the Minister, and with highly trained officers of the department. The School of Mines was to be under the Minister, but was to have its present council of control. Those men had done good work, but they all had to realize that if certain people had not been in charge of that institution it would not have received so much consideration as had been given to it. He regretted that provision had not been made in the Bill for tutorial education and classes, which could so easily be worked in connection with the University. He hoped there would always be a clear line of demarkation between the various grades of education—high, technical, secondary, and primary schools. He asked the Government whether it would not be better to have sixth classes to schools, do away with small high schools, and have big high schools or colleges in central positions. Would any members take the risk of sending their girls to Adelaide to be trained as teachers on the present low allowance? He looked for the day when there would be residential colleges for them, with suitable matrons in charge. The Bill, the first the Labour Party had presented to the House, should have been the best possible, and not one which in its present form should not be passed. They had been proud of their education system, and should see to it that in further dealing with it there should be only improvement and progress.

Mr. Verran—Hear, hear. The Lloyd George of the Chamber.

Mr. Angus secured the adjournment of the debate until to-day.

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THE EDUCATION BILL.

It is to be regretted that in preparing the Education Bill the Government did not attach more weight to the representations of the teachers in favor of a number of important administrative reforms. The Classification Board proposed in the Bill is not likely to prove satisfactory. It is to consist of the Superintendent of Primary Education, who will act as chairman, an inspector selected by the Minister, and a headmaster to be nominated by the teachers. In place of a board the majority of whose members would represent the department the Teachers' Union prefers the scheme adopted in Victoria, where the committee of classifiers consists of the chief inspector, an outside member (at present a barrister) appointed by the Governor in Council, and a teacher. This committee gives general satisfaction, though it is complained that the outsider is not quite free to act independently, as he is subject to removal by the Minister. The principle however, of equal representation for the department and the teaching body, with an outside member holding the balance between them in the public interest, is a sound one. There is also in Victoria a board of appeal, and the whole system works for efficiency, justice, and contentment.

A more serious defect of the Bill now before Parliament is its omission to provide for a Curriculum Board on the lines which have been followed so successfully in the sister State. At present the South Australian primary school course is notoriously overcrowded. It includes something like 17 different subjects, with numerous subdivisions, and these are not only too many, but the time-table is badly arranged, some of the subjects receiving a greater amount of attention than their relative importance warrants. The curriculum needs severe pruning, and should also be made more interesting and attractive. Owing to the congestion of the course, and the comparative brevity of the compulsory school-going period in this State, an undue strain is imposed on teachers and pupils alike, and it is not surprising that the results should be, as in some respects confessedly they are, disappointing. In Victoria and other States the school-going period is eight years; in South Australia only six; but with two years less for teaching and learning the curriculum is equally elaborate and difficult. By its extension of the school age, and provision for more regular attendance, the Bill promises some measure of relief to the overburdened teachers, but the proposal to leave the revision of the curriculum to departmental regulation is a mere evasion of a vital question. Following the Victorian example, the Teachers' Union proposes the establishment of a Curriculum Board, which might consist of equal numbers of teachers and inspectors, with the Director or an independent outsider as the chairman. Certainly the teachers should have a direct, though not a controlling, voice in settling the curriculum. They know exactly where "the shoe pinches" under the present system. Practical experience in working it enables them to gauge pretty accurately the capacity both of teachers and taught, and to suggest directions in which improvement may be secured to the advantage of both. To leave the teachers outside a curriculum scheme, and throw the whole responsibility for the rearrangement of the subjects taught on the officials of the department, would be gratuitously to dispense with the valuable aid which can be rendered by the men and women who are most closely in touch with school work and understand best its difficulties and requirements.

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THE EDUCATION BILL.

To the Editor.

Sir—I read Mr. Peake's speech on the above Bill, and his reference to Boards of Advice, and the substitution of school committees, also Mr. Verran's interjections. Now to deal with Mr. Peake. As an ex-Minister of Education he ought to know something of the inner working of the department, and its relationship with Boards of Advice. I throw back his innendo of the indifference of boards and the need of a change. The proposed committee may work all right in the city and centres of population, but in outside country districts I am more than doubtful of the results. For fifteen years it has been my privilege to preside as chairman of the Green's Plains Board of Advice, and I can say without exaggeration, this board has rendered our education system yeoman service. We have thirteen schools in our district, extending over an area of forty miles square, and with members of my board I have visited these schools, repeatedly travelling hundreds of miles. We have given weeks of our time to the department without fee or reward in the investigation of irregular attendance, complaints as between parents and teachers, and the upkeep and repairs to buildings. Yet Mr. Peake accuses boards of indifference. Let me tell Mr. Peake hundreds of pounds have been wasted because the Minister controlling, I presume on the advice of his officers, has robbed the boards of every bit of power and responsibility. The files in the Education Office will disclose where we have on more than one occasion shown that had the department sought the assistance of this board pounds would have been saved the taxpayer. Had the Education Commission travelled through country districts and sought evidence from boards they would have had eyeopeners in many directions; but the position of the department has been one of antagonism to Boards of Advice. The old regulations provided that boards could in repair and upkeep of buildings spend £5 without having to seek authority from the office. To-day they cannot spend 1/, and teachers are not allowed to seek any repairs from boards without first obtaining the director's consent. This is on the supposed score of economy; but really because the department look with a jealous eye on any interference of boards in their domain of control, vide the Teachers' Conference early this year. Mr. Peake, as an ex-Minister, has known these things, and when in power what did he do to place boards in a better position? Absolutely nothing. Mr. Verran stigmatises boards as perambulating corpses. A nice statement for an ex-Premier. Has it occurred to Mr. Verran, his intimate association with the Hon. W. H. Harvey, the chairman of the Moonta Board for many years, should have enabled him to make the Education Department of this State a people's system, and place the parents' representatives, i.e., Boards of Advice, in a more satisfactory position. The hon. member prates so much about the representation of the people. I wonder he has not seen to this before. Let him turn to Kadina, and there he will find a member of his own party, Mr. James Malcolm, a man who has given the best years of his life to the interest of the school children of his district. I challenge Messrs. Peake and Verran to go to Kadina or any other centre in Mr. Verran's district to debate the usefulness of the present boards, and how, with a little encouragement, they could and would have rendered incalculable service to the department. Before concluding, I would refer to the Bill in its application to country districts. Although it proposes further expenditure by thousands, and raising the age limit to fourteen years, the Bill makes no provision for higher education in centres like Bute, Paskeville, Maitland, and similar places. The high school system only supplies centres of population and city suburbs. The outside is absolutely shut out, above the fifth class standard. The producers have to foot the costs, and surely they should receive some consideration. I hold that a sixth class should be established wherever possible. Then as to the work of committees, the new Bill gives them no power to deal with irregular attendance or to render any assistance to the department in the investigation of complaints as between parents and teachers. So far as I can see to me these committees will be merely bodies without real power. I have not the context of the Bill, so cannot criticise its details. I only know on the authority of a leading Victorian resident that these committees do not accomplish what is claimed for them in outside districts. Their powers are too limited. If the House wish to do any real good let them increase the powers of present boards, and detach them from the apron-strings of the director and staff, giving them access direct to the Minister. Then, and only then, will boards justify their existence. I venture to predict a saving to the taxpayer and a real usefulness to our school system.—I am, &c.,

HENRY H. QUEALE.

Chairman Green's Plains Board of Advice.