

Register 2.7.18.

## TEACHERS' CONFERENCE OPENED.

### PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

#### HIGH OBLIGATIONS AND LOW SALARIES.

The 23rd annual conference of the South Australian Public School Teachers' Union was opened at the Price Memorial Hall, Adelaide High School, on Monday morning. The President of the Union (Mr. J. Moyes) occupied the chair in the presence of a large attendance of teachers. Seated on the platform also were the Director of Education (Mr. M. M. Maughan, B.A.), the Superintendent of Primary Education (Mr. C. Charlton), Chief Inspector West, the Medical Inspector of Schools (Dr. Gertrude Halley), and members of the inspectorial staff and union executive.

#### —The Teacher and The Child.—

The proceedings opened with the presidential address, in which Mr. Moyes observed that the school as an institution for training the young was growing in public estimation, even although the market value of the teacher stood at the same old figure. They were assured that the need for education was never so great as it was to-day, and that the necessity for more thorough and adequate training became more imperative as days went by. Sooner or later the activities and rivalries that were the concomitants of peace would begin, and they must be prepared to take their part in them. The war found them unprepared; what should be their position on the advent of peace? Efforts would be made to strengthen the hands of those engaged in their primary industries, to turn to the best account their natural resources, establish new manufacturing industries, to enable them to be less dependent on outside nations; but above all they must do far more for the State's best asset—the child. It was well to be fortified with a few facts to combat arguments of people who held that money was spent on city children to the detriment of those in the country. The salaries of the teachers of a school of over 1,000 children averaged £2 10/ a head of the scholars; the average in a small country school was as high as £10 a head. That disposed of the contention of those who said that the outback child was neglected to give more to his city cousin. An increase in expenditure was necessary for the extension and development of technical schools, for raising the salaries of the lowest paid teachers, and adjusting the ratio of the remuneration of women teachers to that of the men. The work of education should not be hindered for lack of funds.

#### —Grouping of Schools.—

Another matter to which he desired to refer to was the grouping of the schools in a fixed ratio. That scheme had been in operation for many years, but was inelastic, and had led to many situations that had caused much dissatisfaction. It put a limit on the number of schools in a particular class, and thus placed a bar on the opportunities for promotion. If a school was placed in class 3 the teacher continued to receive the salary for that class, in spite of the fact that his school had grown until it had an average entitling it to be placed in class 1, and entailed on the head teacher the work and the responsibility of a school of that size. The teacher was earning on the department's own estimate, perhaps £30 or £50 a year more than he was paid. It might fairly be urged that no Government should add to its revenue by withholding from its servants the money they earned. If workmen agreed to work for eight hours a day for a certain wage they would object to be compelled to work nine hours for the same pay, and any Arbitration Court would uphold the objection. So far as he could learn, South Australia was the only State in which the fixed ratio of schools prevailed. Regarding those financial disabilities, permanent heads of their department interpreted the regulations as liberally as possible, and from the sympathetic attitude of those officers, there was no doubt that they also would welcome an enactment to make the unpopular group system a thing of the past.

#### —Training Teachers.—

The training of teachers was a burning question, for the proportion of the unclassified was increasing year by year. That fact needed only to be mentioned to make clear the danger not far ahead. Any change in the present method was not to be looked for just now; they must wait until after the war. It was worth while mentioning, however, that a few of the short course trainees were more capable than some who had had the advantage of a University course, probably because of their attitude of heart and mind toward their profession. The University did not make teachers; one who went in a fool came out a bigger fool (laughter), while he who entered full of zeal for his work,

rightly discerning the advantages of a wider knowledge, came forth more fully equipped for his vocation. (Applause.) The junior teachers would be better for two years' teaching instead of one prior to their entry to the University. Of the first four years three were spent in study, and the candidate thought more of books than children. For the first year lack of teaching, practice, and unfamiliarity with the ways of children often made the work irksome, and in the short experience of 12 months he had hardly "got into his stride." It was not to be expected that young people would show special aptitude at once; the reverse was often the case; and therefore a two years' course would be a great advantage, for it would familiarize the teachers with their work; give them practical knowledge and skill; enable them to decide whether the real thing was equal to what their fancy pictured it, and show whether the department would be justified in sending them on to the University.

—Noblest of Professions.—

They were members of the noblest of professions—one that gave ample scope for service; that received but little of this world's rewards; that demanded the highest qualities of heart and mind, and that numbered and had numbered in its ranks some of the best of God's creation. The teacher's life differed from any other in that it was in a sense stationary, and touched young lives that passed by it continually, its duty being to furnish material for others' lives rather than its own. Therein lay its nobility. It was not by getting that they enriched the world, but by giving of their best. The results of their labour might never be known to them, but it was an inspiring thought that good honest work never died, and that the future of this State (and of the Commonwealth) might be brighter for the faithful deeds of its teachers. The making of good citizens was of more importance to the State than anything else, and it was their privilege as well as their duty to turn out the best possible article. The good speller was of less value than the man of honour; the large-hearted philanthropist counted for more than the mere expert in decimals.

—"Mental Servility."—

The teaching of large classes, doing so many things in the mass, had hindered individualism, and prevented the operation of personal contact. Individual responsibility came first, but by proper development might broaden into responsibility for the community. Large classes were, as it were, made up of mere units that might be replaced by others, individualism being lost; while small classes gave the teacher a chance to individualize and know and differentiate between the personalities of Fred, Harry, and John. He believed the Director once said that he thought the children in small country places were better taught than those in large schools in the city. Within limits that was correct. The teacher of a dozen children had better opportunities; he might soon learn the scholars' individualities, and if he was a good type of citizen himself he might give some of his characteristics to each pupil, as by personal contact virtue went out of him. They could not give what they did not possess; it therefore behove them all to cultivate those qualities which made for goodness, and endeavour to pass them on to the scholars. One advantage the teacher of a small school had was the opportunity for training the children. With large classes that was impossible, and if the State wanted to have its children trained, rather than taught, and have their individualities properly developed, it must reduce the size of the classes. When the pupil did more for himself (helped along by the teacher), he might have a chance of developing into an independent thinker. At present they found too much of what an Englishman 20 years ago called "mental servility." One child depended too much on another's thought, and feared to launch out for himself. The same state of affairs was unfortunately too common among people of older years, and a man with a glib tongue might by specious arguments become a sort of leader looked up to as a clever expounder of political or other beliefs, because the great majority were too indolent to think for themselves. Was not that because they had not been trained to independent thought? How much better for Australia to have 1,000,000 independent thinkers instead of 1,000? What better balance it would give to public and national thought, and how it would retard the rushing to extremes! Could they not get more of this independence under better conditions? Under those that existed at present there was no hope. They would need smaller classes for individual training and a change in the method of inspection.

—Standard of Conduct.—

They must not forget that as citizens their scholars must, later on, face great responsibilities, and should be trained to serve their country faithfully. Instead of spending time in learning the names of members of Parliament and the number in each House, much better use might be made of the lesson. Let the child be taught that he was under law from the day of his birth. When he was unconscious of it he had to obey it. To give their best to their employers, or to pay a fair wage to their employes, were matters not beneath the teacher's notice; in fact, a point to emphasize was that the "go-slow" policy would make a nation poor instead of rich, and that a man who would not give an equivalent for what he received in money of work was no better than a bushranger.

In conclusion, Mr. Moyes said they needed independent thinkers. People who would put their country's wants above all others; citizens who would acknowledge the supremacy of law. Teachers' work was arduous, and demanded the highest qualities of manhood and womanhood; but when well done, it made the State their debtor, and they would often be stirred and encouraged by the sympathy and appreciation of parents who, at least, were grateful for what they did. It was the glory of the teacher that while the valuation of his services by the State did not properly balance the estimation in which they were held by the people, to the call of duty he was never disobedient. (Applause.)

—"Independent Thinking."

The Director of Education, in the course of an address, said he was afraid that the Oligarchy Government was that of their day, when they were flattering themselves that such was not the case. The reason was that, to a large extent, their people were not independent thinkers. What proportion of those with whom they came into ordinary daily contact were really independent thinkers? Readily swayed masses of men, who had no definite opinions of their own, and were accustomed to have their minds made up for them, and to repeat the views of others, were a real danger to the community. Many children left school just when the power of independent thinking was rapidly developing, and they were therefore handicapped in after life. Proceeding, Mr. Maughan said that the Education Department had been fighting a constant battle to increase the school teaching staffs. In 1915, 207 new teachers were added to the list of appointments; in 1916 and 1917, 300 each; and 1918, 250. Without counting 56 who had just left the Observation School, more than 1,000 teachers had been appointed in the past four years; but yet the cumbersome classes in the city were being barely maintained. There were 500 of those teachers in the backblocks, and 150 had gone to the war. Country centres often lost teachers through marriage. For some time, Oodnadatta was regarded as a popular place, as during the past two years every girl who had been sent there had married. (Laughter.)

On the motion of Mr. G. N. Gosden, a vote of thanks was accorded the President and the Director.

The Treasurer of the Union (Mr. T. H. S. Nicolle) read a statement indicating that the membership of the union had reached high-water mark. There was a total of 1063—882 active and 181 overseas members; an increase of 326 since last year.

The members of the Women Teachers' Progressive League provided luncheon for country women teachers at the school, after which the annual meeting of the Rural Teachers' Central Association was held.

*Advertise, 3.7.18.*

The Parliamentary Draftsman and Assistant Crown Solicitor (Mr. A. J. Hannan), who enlisted on Tuesday, joined the Government legal staff five years ago. Mr. Hannan had a successful career at the Adelaide University, where he graduated in arts and law, and last year was lecturer in the theory of law and theory of legislation. He made rapid progress in the Civil Service. Mr. Hannan, who is a native of Port Pirie, would have joined the colors earlier had not the Government deemed it impossible to spare him.

Advertiser 3.7.18

## TEACHERS' UNION.

### DECISION AGAINST INDUSTRIAL REGISTRATION.

The annual conference of the South Australian Public Teachers' Union was resumed at the Adelaide High School on Tuesday, when attention was given to the business agenda. Mr. J. Moyes presided over a large attendance.

#### Industrial Registration.

Mr. C. Maley moved—"That in the opinion of this conference it is desirable that the South Australian Public Teachers' Union should be registered as an industrial union." He was quite unable to understand the heated feeling which this resolution had caused in the case of some individuals. A number of teachers desired registration, and, therefore, had a right to it, unless there could be shown good reasons to the contrary. He did not believe that by registration they would put themselves in a position to force the hands of the department in any matter. They could not approach the Arbitration Court, but registration would give them a legal status which they did not at present enjoy. Suppose, for instance, their treasurer should pocket the funds, they had no claim to legal redress. (A Voice—"Nonsense.") Supposing they wished to hold land on lease or by purchase they could have no legal title to it, and the only way to acquire any legal existence was by incorporation. Some teachers had suggested that they should seek an act of incorporation, but what folly it would be to waste money and energy on a somewhat tortuous course, which might conceivably fail, when they could accomplish the same purpose gratuitously, quickly, and certainly, by the mere act of registration as an industrial association. One objection was that registration would bring them into close contact with the Trades Hall. Even if it did, that would not do them any harm, and it might do the Trades Hall a lot of good. (Laughter.) Supposing it would bring them closer to politics, they as teachers would not come into their own until they acquired a much greater pull on the political machine than they had yet. They were not a fighting union to the extent they ought to be. They should be less ready than in the past to be bluffed by promises. There was in registration a potential aggressiveness, and it would therefore have a valuable moral effect on members of the union as well as on the officers of the department.

Mr. J. D. Drinkwater, in seconding the motion, said since his visit to Queensland last Christmas he was quite convinced that unionism for teachers was the right thing. There anything the teachers brought forward was listened to with respect, and when any change was mooted in the department they were consulted in every case. Hitherto in South Australia they had been only playing with unionism. By registration they would know where they were and could guarantee a certain membership.

Mr. R. Sutton vigorously opposed the motion. They had no reason to register as an industrial union, and it would be of no value to them. By registering they would arouse opposition in quarters where they did not want to arouse it, and which were stronger than the Teachers' Union.

The motion was opposed by Messrs. J. H. Williams and W. J. Gunn, and supported by Mr. F. Duke.

The Chairman, in reply to a question, said he thought in Queensland the teachers generally were satisfied with registration, although, so far, it had not been a great success, except in the case of the lower-paid teachers. Someone had said to him, "What we old men spent 30 years in trying to do for the teachers is being undone in a couple of years by this industrialism."

After further debate the motion was voted upon, and was declared lost by about 80 votes to 35.

#### Reports.

The corresponding secretary (Mr. R. Sutton) reported that 22 associations of teachers were affiliated with the union, including the Women Teachers' Progressive League (245 members), and the Rural Teachers' Association (122). It was felt that the most progressive teachers in the service were members of the organization. The membership had increased from 554 to 830 during the year. There were nearly 1,300 teachers eligible for membership, and it was hoped that the present members would do all in their power to induce the remainder to join up.

The treasurer (Mr. T. H. S. Nicolle) reported—Receipts during the year, £173; expenditure, £123; credit bank balance, £50.

The minute secretary (Mr. J. W. Odgers) reported that there had been eleven meetings of the executive, with an average attendance of 14 out of 18.

Officers elected:—President, Mr. G. S. Berriman; president-elect, Mr. R. Sutton; immediate past president, Mr. J. Moyes; vice-presidents, Mrs. A. B. Melville and Mr. J. D. A. Drinkwater; treasurer, Mr. H. J. Tuck; corresponding secretary, Mr. T. H. S. Nicolle; minute secretary, Mr. J. W. Odgers; assistant secretary, Mr. J. H. Williams; members of executive, Messrs. C. Maley, W. J. Gunn, G. N. Gooden, and H. M. Lush, Misses Watson and Healy.

At the afternoon session the next president (Mr. Berriman) occupied the chair.