

ADDRESS BY MR. ANGAS PARSONS.

Matters of vital public interest relating to education reform in South Australia were touched upon by Mr. Angus Parsons, K.C., M.P., in an address before the North Adelaide branch of the Congregational Church Men's Society, at Brougham-place Lecture Hall, on Monday night. The Rev. Alfred Gifford presided, and in introducing the speaker said education had been defined by a lad at a London School Board examination as "that which keeps us from going to the bad." Certainly South Australia would go to the bad, in individuals and en masse, unless it gave special attention to this pressing question.

Selecting for his subject, "The Educational Rights of Youth," Mr. Angus Parsons, who was enthusiastically received, said it was a fact that of all the public problems that were crowding upon them, none was more important or deserving of interest, support, and study than that of education. How could a democracy, entrusted as it was on attaining the age of 21 years, with the stupendous responsibility of dictating the policy of government, hope to be successful unless it was an educated democracy? (Applause.) It was that consideration, chiefly, that had led him to make some enquiry into the principles of education and to enquire how, in a practical manner, education reform could be applied to this State. Mr. Gifford had done well to direct attention to the way in which their teachers were not only educated but paid. It was aptly stated in a recent report of the English Board of Education that "in material prospects the teaching profession can never hope to compete with other professions. But it has in itself great attractions. In dignity and importance it may well claim to stand among the first of all public services." (Applause.) In South Australia when they turned to the latest report of the Minister of Education they found that the salaries of primary school teachers amounted during 1918 to £215,758, which was £14,495 more than in 1917. This was accounted for partly by the practice having been adopted from July of debiting to salaries the amount deducted for rent of residence. A sum of £1,713 was thus charged as expenditure under this heading. The main reason for the higher cost was the larger number of teachers employed. It must be apparent that to have efficient service they must pay adequate salaries. That was not a truism of particular application to the teaching profession, but one of general, almost universal, application. As far as the women teachers were concerned, there were 1,246 engaged in the State primary schools, and of that number no fewer than 497 were unclassified teachers in the class IX. country schools. They were women who had had, as a rule, no more than primary education, and only six months' training at the Observation School in Currie-street to equip them for the responsibility of going out into the highways and byways of the land and teaching the rising generation. There were in addition 340 unclassified assistants in the public schools, who had not completed their training. That accounted for 837 out of the 1,246 women teachers, leaving fully classified up to the regular standard only 409, or less than a third of the total. A study of the figures for the last few years showed that the number of unclassified women teachers in class IX. schools and of unclassified assistants was steadily growing greater in proportion to the number of properly trained women teachers. In the metropolitan area there were no fewer than 149 women teaching in the schools who were unclassified. In Port Pirie of 15 women teaching, nine were unclassified. The rest were all short course teachers. What was true of Port Pirie was also true of many other places. What was the reason for it? For a woman to become a classified teacher she must go through five years' apprenticeship. That in itself suggested how careful and complete was the training required for her to become a craftswoman in her life's work. That five years' apprenticeship included the duty of going through certain University examinations, yet after all that work was accomplished she was entitled to a salary of £100 a year. (Voices—"Shame!")

Discrepancies in Salary.

Mr. Parsons asked his audience to compare that with the salary of the unclassified woman assistant, or the class IX. woman teacher, and they would see why the fully trained were growing less numerically. As compared with the five years' training of the classified teacher, without more than what had been described as a perfunctory examination, the unclassified teacher got exactly the same salary. (Voices—"Shame!") But the classified woman teacher had a further immediate disadvantage, because she was subject to deductions for the Superannuation Fund, of £8 a year, rising up to £12 a year, and her salary increased per annum only £4. So four years had to elapse before the woman teacher fully classified was able to get any additional salary. It really took the classified woman teacher nine years' service to reach £100 a year. (Voices—

Mr. Angus Parsons seconded, and said if it were possible to accommodate the present and future needs of the University the present site had much to be said in its favour. However, one had to have regard for the future. From the original expenditure of £45,000 the amount had increased to £80,000, with a result neither satisfactory from a point of view of beauty nor architecture. The Public Library had outgrown its accommodation, and would need land near by for its extension. The doors of the University should be open to all, the only qualification necessary being brains, and the desire to apply them. They would get a better result if they had residential colleges attached to the University. The mental hospital provided a space of 125 acres. For what better purpose could it be secured than to provide it for University use? It did not involve immediate expenditure.

Mr. Denny, M.C., in support, said to-day in England and America the men who came out best were those who had started life with a serious handicap. If South Australia was going to hold its own in the walk of life leaders of commerce must be prepared to come down handsomely in the way of funds. Where there was a university that had anything to do with snobbery they did not get the best results.

Mr. Parsons—You do not get snobbery at a university.

Mr. Denny said he would not particularize. There should not be a brainy boy in South Australia who should not be pushed on to the University for the benefit of himself as a citizen and the welfare of the Commonwealth. It was necessary for a university to be placed in the centre of the city. He knew of no class whose work was less recognised and more important than teachers, not only in this State but other parts of the world.

Mr. Parsons—Not in Scotland.

Mr. Denny—In Scotland they pay little for anything. (Laughter.)

The Premier said he did not think at any time the proposition received any opposition from any hon member. They might well earmark this particular site for purposes worthy and useful to the State rather than it should fall into the hands of a speculator, who might want to survey it into blocks 50 ft. x 50 ft. (Laughter.) The motion was thoroughly worthy of support. The University should have the first call on the land, and from that point of view the motion was thoroughly worthy of support. He pointed out, however, that the Government had a financial responsibility which did not rest on private members. It was easy for them to come down to the House and spread themselves at large on tremendous schemes, but the Government had to find the money. When the Government policy speech declared for no extra taxation, it did not contemplate, as of course it could not possibly have contemplated, certain expensive events which had happened since, and had brought about a serious financial position—influenza, strike, and so forth. They were justified in taking the view that they had to meet unexpected expenditure and to provide for the payment of these things. How much further could they carry the point and say "We are warranted in coming down for more taxation for things which could easily be justified, such as increased expenditure for education, and increased payment for members?"

Mr. Hill—Then your policy was only for a short duration?

The Premier said that policy was for war time only, and before increased taxation was imposed they had a right to go back to the country and say, "The period for which the proposals were made has expired, and we must enlarge our scheme for taxation. We have come back to you to seek your authority for it." When demands were made for increased expenditure on education and in other directions, the reply of the Government was that so far as it could see, there was no money available, and sanction to raise it would have to be sought. He hoped members would not be unnecessarily alarmed by that statement, which seemed to him a perfectly proper one.

Mr. Gunn—What about a dissolution?

The Premier said he did not see how they were going back to the country without a dissolution. He would like to see the surroundings of the Adelaide University thoroughly in keeping with a great institution. When he looked at the Sydney University, standing in queenly beauty in a splendid park, it made one feel that that was indeed a model for every university to adopt; Melbourne was not nearly so good. They had a right to look for proper surroundings for their University in the future, perhaps a very long future, in the State yet to be. He hoped the motion would be carried, and that it would be assented to by another place. He commended Mr. Smeaton for having brought the motion forward, and commended it to the House.

On the motion of Mr. Gunn, the debate was adjourned until September 24.

"Symphony."—The Government makes no grant to the Conservatorium. The Chair of Music, however, has an endowment of £20,000. By Act of Parliament the Government pays the University 5 per cent. per annum on all endowments, but this subsidy goes to the general expenses of the University, and not to the several chairs or schools. The Conservatorium concerts are not taxed either by the State or the Commonwealth. The salary of the Professor of Music, who is also Director of the Elder Conservatorium, is £500 per annum. The director does not receive any honorarium as the result of the Conservatorium concerts.

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MENTAL HOSPITAL SITE FOR UNIVERSITY.

Mr. Smeaton's Scheme.

The question of removing the Adelaide University was brought before the Assembly on Wednesday by Mr. Smeaton, who moved:—"That in view of the contemplated erection of a new mental hospital at Enfield, it be determined that the site of the present buildings and grounds at Parkside be definitely secured for the future use of the Adelaide University." Mr. Smeaton said he had brought the matter before the University Council a few years ago, but that body had little sympathy with it. A number of professors favoured the idea, but the council itself turned it down. He submitted it to them about a month ago with a different result. The council supported him unanimously. The mover then traced the growth and activities of the University. It was, he said, a small thing in its beginning. He wanted to mention some information that had only come to him that day through the courtesy of Mr. Fred Johns, the author of "Notable Australians," the work in which this information was given.

Mr. Denny—And the writer of many poems. (Laughter.)

Mr. Smeaton thanked Mr. Johns for directing his attention to the interesting historical information he had given in his book about the foundation of the Adelaide University. The late Dr. Jefferis approached the late Sir W. W. Hughes, and asked him to divert a gift he intended to make to the Congregational Training College to University purposes. That was a generous thing for Dr. Jefferis to do, because he was the acknowledged leader of Congregationalism in South Australia at that time, and also, he thought, the Principal of the Congregational Training College. He showed much magnanimity in seeking to divert from that college the £20,000 that was offered to him by the late Sir W. W. Hughes, and this gift was really the beginning of the Adelaide University. The cause of education should be pushed on in South Australia.

The Premier—The Government is prepared to spend on education as much as the people will provide. I think I have done as much for education in South Australia as you have.

Mr. Denny—And have not talked so much about it.

Mr. Smeaton said he thought the Premier had done more. As Treasurer of this State he would find it his duty to get money for educational needs by taxation.

Mr. Gunn—You went to the country behind him, and said no further taxation.

Mr. Edwards—That's not bad.

Mr. Smeaton said when this country was at war everything stood aside.

Mr. Edwards—There we are again.

Mr. Smeaton—Even if old associations and friendships have to go.

Mr. Gunn—I am talking about the policy you went to the country on.

Mr. Smeaton—There was no policy.

Mr. Fitzgerald—But "hang on." (Laughter.)

Mr. Smeaton said Labour members would find their greatest critic on their own side in Capt. Denny.

Mr. Gunn—That is beside the point.

Mr. Denny—What does the hon. member refer to? I do not understand.

Mr. Smeaton said the hon. member knew perfectly well what he referred to. Now that they had won the war they could surely raise for peace what they had raised for war. He favoured the removal of the Conservatorium to another site. It would be a good thing to hand the buildings over to the Education Department for use as headquarters.

THE NEW DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION.

The Hobart "Mercury" prints the following additional particulars about Mr. W. T. McCoy, the new Director of Education in South Australia, who is expected to arrive from the island State about October 1:—

Mr. McCoy is a Bachelor of Arts of Sydney University, and received his professional training in New South Wales, where he was one of the principal inspectors of the State Education Department when, with high credentials, he was appointed in 1909 as Director of Education for Tasmania. The choice proved abundantly justified, for during the period of over nine years he has had control of the department, Tasmania's educational system has been developed and extended in a way little short of remarkable, until to-day it bears highly favorable comparison with the systems of other States. The situation at the time Mr. McCoy took the position was of a rather delicate character, but by the exercise of tact and firmness he soon had it in hand, and set vigorously to work to erect a new edifice of education upon the foundation which Mr. W. L. Neale, his predecessor, had just previously laid after deciding to scrap the old system. That Mr. McCoy succeeded in his task the present high state of efficiency throughout the Education Department is ample testimony. An educationist with a broad outlook, zealous, energetic, and an able administrator, with plenty of initiative, he has introduced many reforms, innovations, and improvements in the system of education which will ever be for the benefit of the State and its young life. Under his direction, the system of primary education has been reorganised, and kindergarten and Montessori work introduced into the larger schools, and their principles extended to the smaller schools. In the more isolated country districts he has established subsidised schools, and a more recent innovation promising well, is that of a correspondence school for the benefit of children in the backblocks unable to attend any school on account of their isolation. He initiated and established a secondary school system, embracing secondary, commercial, domestic, and industrial teaching, and organised qualifying certificate, intermediate, and leaving examinations in connection with it. As a sequel to the Nangle-McCoy Commission, he has in recent times thoroughly reorganised technical education in the State, and put it on a sound basis, this reform including the establishment of four junior technical schools. The activities of the department in the matter of the medical inspection of school children have been extended by the appointment of school nurses and the introduction of dental treatment for the scholars, in connection with which there are two travelling dental clinics. At the Training College, too, the effect of his work is apparent in the provision of four separate courses, varying in length from six months to three years for the training of the small school teacher, the primary teacher in large schools, the infant teacher, and the secondary school teacher, and the work of the college has also been co-ordinated with that of the university in the arts and sciences. In several other directions Mr. McCoy has improved the facilities enabling the teachers to secure a sound and thorough training to fit them for their important calling. In the matter of school buildings there has been a marked change during Mr. McCoy's tenure as director. As far as possible he has standardised the different types with an eye on future developments, and there are five distinct kinds of school to suit varying localities, ranging from the large city school to the smaller building, fulfilling the requirements of country districts. Cordial relations exist between the director and teachers and scholars. His bright and breezy personality has made him very popular with the youngsters, and by the teachers he is regarded as firm, but essentially fair and just. In his capacity as a member of the University Council, Mr. McCoy has done useful work in helping to link up the work of that institution with that of the technical, secondary, and primary schools, and has been a member of the Faculty of Letters, Faculty of Commerce, Board of Studies, and Standing Committee. Mr. McCoy is a bowler, and president of the Hobart Bowling Club. Mrs. McCoy's work in various capacities will also be missed. She has been a member of the committee of the Consumptives' Sanatorium, an officer of the V.A.D., prominent in patriotic and charitable efforts, and an active worker at St. John's Presbyterian Church.

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