

THE TEACHERS' UNION. Anniversary Celebrations. Character and Education.

If education is proceeding along right lines the result must lead towards the uplifting, enlightenment, and general happiness of the people as a whole, says the president of the Public Teachers' Union.

ample scope for experiments along definite lines of present-day progress. That altered view was the outcome of the parallel growth of the science of education and psychology. Those twin sciences had grown up almost unnoticed, and were just beginning to radiate their influence upon the lives of their little folk through the medium of the teaching profession. School accommodation must be made to cope with the progress of things. The people employed an expert second to none in the Commonwealth, but he had no control over that very vital avenue of educational development. Should not the Department of Education be so consolidated as to enable the expert to determine absolutely what accommodation should be provided? School committees were doing good work in matters of that nature, but there was a great difference in the enthusiasm and activity of local committees. The value of the local advisory unit was only beginning to be recognised. The two important factors there were the teacher and the parent; when they united in the interests of the children the process of education would be continuous in both situations, and many of the problems would solve themselves. Further, the changing aspect of the school system was beginning to make itself felt in the matter of the size of classes. The work now became increasingly difficult, for each child required individual attention from the teacher, and the strain on the latter was greater than formerly. The work of a teacher became less efficient if his vitality was impaired. Less efficient work, too, was more costly, and it would probably be effecting an economy if classes were of such a size that the demands on the nervous energy of teachers were lessened. Much of the sick leave granted to teachers was doubtless caused by minor ailments which supervened upon a depleted physical and nervous system. The Education Department had already installed a fine medical clinic, and much useful work was being done in examining the teeth, eyes, and general health of children, but could not that valuable piece of medical machinery be made to cope with the whole school?

Teachers Well Informed.

How far had that march of progress affected the teacher? Mr. Lushey asked. Formerly they were often lacking both in knowledge and in the technique of their profession, but now they were enthusiastic, well informed, and well versed in the technicalities of their work. The development of a self-conscious teaching profession was an achievement of modern times. The public estimation of the collective value of teachers was perhaps greater than that of the teachers themselves, and their status had now become fully recognised. Were a Chair of Education in existence the calling would be definitely established on a fully recognised professional basis. Surely that was not too much to ask, in view of the importance of the service rendered to the community by teachers. The outlook had recently been made more attractive, and with the security of better salaries, teachers could concentrate on the more essential values in education. Money, however, though one factor in securing a supply of teachers, could not buy the most essential asset—personality. It was quite wrong to think that a teacher had finished his training when he left the teachers' college. He must continue to acquire a broader outlook, and strive to have a variety of interests, for those were more valuable to him in his personal influence on children than even the scholastic attainments which begot promotion for him. The great danger he had to guard against arose from the monotony and routine of a system such as they were obliged to have in each State of the Commonwealth. Their Director had given wonderful relief from the effect of a necessary officialdom and uniformity, but even now, if the teacher was not careful, he would gradually become a victim to the commonplace, losing the whole of his inspiration, and thus becoming a soulless individual. The existing system tended to keep him so much wrapped up in his daily routine that his interests were narrowed, thus making him in touch with life at fewer points than ever. A further change which had been brought about by the altered meaning of the word "education" was that both the teacher and teaching itself had been humanised. The time was when the rod was the chief agent in the educative process, but now its use had practically been eliminated in the State. The humanising subjects of singing, drawing, elocution, and Nature study had an important bearing on the development of character and were rightly stressed in the South Australian system. The recent step along the road toward a more normal, natural, and human system of education. The director had also made every pointed reference to sport as a character builder in their schools. Perceptible change was seen in the fact that education had been democratized. Formerly it was regarded as essentially the privilege of the few; now, however, it was the possession of all, and none could deny the right to even the humblest in the land. The diffusion of education had opened up realms to the people as a whole that were formerly forbidden to them. The desire for a higher life was innate in all, and whereas that desire had been previously stultified now it was fostered as one of the attributes which made for happiness in life. At one time a child was regarded as an industrial unit, but he is now regarded in terms of a potential citizen, and so it became the

duty of the State to see that its economic and social ideals were reproduced in the rising generation. The particular result of that was that education had become a function of government of the first importance. A consideration of the Minister of Education's report, which had recently been published, would serve to show how the problem was being faced, and to what extent the system in that State had grown during the past decade.

The growth in these directions had been on an ever-increasing scale, and some idea of the task entailed in supervising, controlling, and co-ordinating that huge system of more than 1,000 schools could be gained from the report. Not only must the system be comprehensive and coherent, but it must also be flexible enough to change with the times. The problem was always threefold, namely, where to teach, what to teach, and how to teach. The three entities engaged on that all-important problem were the Government, the department, and the teachers, and each was fully alive to the needs of the situation, while the cordial relations existing between them facilitated in every way the harmonious working of an ever-growing educational system. (Applause.)

"Education in the Forefront."

In an address on education, the Premier-elect said he remembered the time when it was not considered proper for teachers to criticise their education system, but that day was past. They had had a splendid and most appropriate address from their President. He advised all teachers to join the union, and strengthen it in the good work it was doing. The Government heartily encouraged the organization of teachers. He believed a great amount of good would result from their gatherings. They were in the profession because they loved it. Education should be in the forefront of any Government policy. He could assure them that his Government would not starve the department. (Applause.) The programme they had begun would be completed, and if he were not in the Government when it was due for completion he would be a noisy member on the other side of the House. He was optimistic enough to hope that he would be with them next year. The annual expenditure of the University was approximately £80,000. Of that amount the Government subsidy was £43,000. It must be understood by those people who criticised the free education system that if the Government had not supported the University there would not be 2,000 students there now. Many changes were taking place in their education system, and he hoped they would continue. They were now putting the finishing touches on an up-to-date teachers' college at North terrace, and £2,000 was to be expended forthwith on furnishing it. The recent award of the teachers by the Industrial Court was an indication that they had not previously been paid the salaries they merited. They now had 525 more people in the department than in 1923, and there was still a shortage of teachers. He had been impressed, on a visit to the west coast, with the stoutheartedness of those young teachers who were living among the mallee and the rabbits, and teaching in tin sheds. Members going out to the farback areas should receive extra consideration. He had received most loyal assistance from the officers of the department. In Mr. McCoy they had a zealous and energetic director, who was doing his best to introduce the most up-to-date methods. Mr. Charlton (deputy-director) was untiring in his efforts. He also mentioned Dr. Schultz (Principal of the Teacher's Training College), Dr. Fenner (Superintendent of Technical Education), Mr. Adey (Director of Secondary Education), Miss Lamb, and others. In the establishment of their central schools Mr. Pavia and Miss Miethke, of the inspectors' staff, had rendered valued service. An exhibition would be held in December at the Exhibition Building, when specimens of the work by pupils of the central schools would be displayed. The council of the University had approached the Government with an offer to provide evening lectures for teachers, if the Government would supply the funds. The Government had decided to spend £1,500 for the first year, and £3,000 a year subsequently. The classes would start in March, and already 100 teachers had indicated their intention to attend.

Agricultural Training.

Continuing, the Minister said they would build the agricultural high school at Urrbrae Gardens, at a cost of £35,000 as soon as possible. They had an area of 134 acres for the purpose. He hoped the school would be ready for occupation in January 1928. He concluded with a reference to the medical inspection of school children, and the attention being paid to backward children, and was applauded as he resumed his seat.

At the instance of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. E. W. Skitch, the hearty thanks of the meeting were conveyed to Mr. Hill.

REG. NEWS 3-9'26

Professor Wood Jones left for Melbourne by train on Thursday afternoon. He will deliver post-graduate lectures at the Melbourne University.

The 31st anniversary celebrations of the Public Teachers' Union were opened in the Price Hall, Grote-street, on Thursday evening, in the presence of a large gathering. The chair was occupied by the president of the union (Mr. H. M. Lushey), and among those on the platform were the Minister of Education (Hon. L. L. Hill), the Deputy Director of Education (Mr. C. Charlton), the headmaster of Prince Alfred College (Mr. W. R. Bayly), the president-elect (Mr. E. W. Skitch), the treasurer (Mr. L. R. Gordon), and the principal of the Adelaide High School (Mr. R. A. West).

The chairman congratulated Mr. Hill on the progress he had made. They were pleased to acknowledge the great interest he had taken in educational matters. He had always been fair in his dealings with the teachers. They were proud to know that he was about to attain the highest position in the land. (Cheers.)

A New Sense of Hope.

Mr. Lushey, in his presidential address, said in calling the meeting that evening it was their purpose to bring together as many people as possible who were sufficiently interested in the educational welfare of the State to take an active part in fostering a spirit and an atmosphere of education. A new sense of hope was dawning—on all sides a movement was discernible—the nature of education was being understood, its real value to the body politic was being grasped. The first and fundamental change lay in the meaning and interpretation of the word education, which formerly implied the mere acquisition of knowledge. The school, in conse-



The Hon. L. L. Hill.

quence, was regarded simply as the place for acquiring piles of knowledge, much of which proved to be quite inadequate, and very often of no practical use. It was not a matter of what had to be learned, but rather of the one who had to learn it, and so education must be based on the laws of psychology, which told them that knowledge (as such) was not the mainspring of conduct—to know the right was not necessarily to do the right. The Germans' system of education was merely "to know," and there was evidence of where their conceit led them; the American idea was "to do," but ultimately the dollar was the power there that moved to action; the British ideal had now come to be "the development of character." (Cheers.)

A Chair of Education.

The only difference now between the professions was that those of law and medicine were directly connected with the University, and that of teaching was not. Were a Chair of Education in existence, the profession would be definitely established on a fully recognised professional basis. Surely this was not too much to ask, in view of the importance of the service rendered to the community by teachers as a body. (Cheers.) It had been said that the problems of education largely centred in the supply of the right type of men and women for the task of teaching. Moreover, the outlook had recently been made more attractive, and in the security of better salaries teachers could concentrate on the more essential values in education. Money, however, though one factor in securing a supply of teachers, could not buy the most essential asset—personality. The enthusiasm of the average teacher in his work, and the desire for improvement in his methods, was a striking example of what their teaching

college work really accomplished. The Director of Education had given wonderful relief from the effect of a necessary officialdom and uniformity, but even now, if the teacher were not careful, he would gradually become a victim to the commonplace, losing the whole of his inspiration and thus becoming a soulless individual. There was one further change to be noticed, which had been occasioned by the altered meaning of the word education. Both the teacher and teaching had been humanised. Time was when attendance at school was maintained only with extreme difficulty, but now parents knew how difficult it was to keep most of their children from the school even when they were ill.

Education Democratized.

The outstanding changes in the significance of education were creating new demands in accommodation, parental co-operation, the size of classes, and the supply of the right kind of person for the teaching office. But perhaps a more perceptible change was seen in the fact that education had been democratized. Formerly it was regarded only as something which was essentially the privilege of the few; now it was the possession of all, and none could deny the right to even the humblest in the land. There might be barriers in other realms, but there were none in matters pertaining to education. If their system of education was progressing along right lines (and they sincerely believed that it was) the result must tend towards the uplifting, enlightenment, and general happiness of the people as a whole. The acceptance of this view was the true sanction for democratizing education, and from it compulsion followed as a natural consequence. At one time, a child was regarded as an industrial unit, but recent speeches regarded him in terms of a potential citizen, and so it became the duty of the State to see that its economic and social ideals were reproduced in the rising generation. The particular result of this was that education had become a function of Government of the first importance. The growth had been on an ever increasing scale, and some idea of the task entailed in supervising, controlling, and co-ordinating this huge system of over 1,000 schools could be gained from a glance at the report of the Minister of Education. Not only must the system be comprehensive and coherent, but it must also be flexible enough to change with the changing times, for all these attributes were rendered necessary by the growth of democracy. The problem was always threefold, viz., "Where to teach?" "What to teach?" and "How to teach?" The first concerned the most suitable accommodation, apparatus, and equipment; the second touched the various curricula, and their co-ordination on a properly graded plan; the third was wholly a matter of teaching skill. The three entities engaged on this all important problem were the Government, the department, and the teachers, and enough had already been said to show that each was fully alive to the needs of the situation, whilst the cordial relations at present existing between them facilitated in every way the harmonious working of an ever-growing educational system. (Cheers.)

Address by Minister of Education.

The Minister, who was greeted with cheers, thanked them for their welcome and kind expressions. He said not so many years ago it was not considered a nice thing for teachers to stand up and express their opinion of the Education Department. If they did so, in many cases, they were called to order. Things had changed, however, and he thought if teachers wanted to be judged as sensible people they would join the Teachers' Union. Teachers followed their profession largely on account of their love for the children.

Quite a number of people, who, as their president had said, at one time looked down on teachers, now recognised their value. Education should be in the forefront of any Government's policy. When he had been chosen as the new Premier he considered which of the three important portfolios he held he would retain. It was a recognised thing now that the leader of the Government should have his hand on the purse. (Laughter.) Therefore he had to take the portfolio of Treasurer, but he considered that Education should not be the Cinderella of the public departments, but should be the most important. Therefore he decided to retain that portfolio also. He assured them that the Government under his guidance would not starve the Education Department. (Cheers.) If any attempt was made to do so he would strongly oppose it. He, however, was an optimist, and believed he would be with them again next year. (Cheers.)