

THE TEACHERS' CONFERENCE.

THIRD DAY.

The annual conference in connection with the South Australian Teachers' Union was continued at the Trades Hall on Wednesday morning, when the president (Mr. J. Donnell) occupied the chair.

Mr. Frederic Chapple, B.A., B.Sc., in the course of an able address, said for the last 25 years he had been a close observer of all the educational work of this colony, had seen the base extend as the outlying districts had been supplied with provisional schools, and the apex rise as the University became more and more worthy of its name. There had been improvement in external conditions, in buildings, and equipment. There had been a wonderful expansion of curriculum in all classes of schools, and advance in their work. And there had been great increase in the esteem and respect manifested towards the teacher by the public and in the confidence reposed in him. The most important and promising improvement was that which had taken place within the teaching profession itself. Its parts were becoming more and more coherent. There was a growing sense of unity in it. They believed in one another more. As the unification of the teaching profession was a "consummation devoutly to be wished," and as the movement towards it was developing in intensity, it might be worth while to consider how this corporate body would work. 1. It would seek to improve the whole self-body. If the whole body is to be sound, every member of it must be healthy. So their profession would demand that none enter it but the worthy—the duly qualified. The "crammer" should have no quarter, the "result-monger" should be left to his own meanness; the man who undercut and undersold, and who sweated and underpaid his assistants was a traitor to the general dignity, and he should be ostracised. Only the true, honest worker should have countenance and moral support. Let the last and the least, the teacher of the farthest provisional school, feel that he was not alone, that at least his brethren knew and appreciated the worth of the work he was doing. Further, it would do all that it could to foster and aid in all teachers, continuous mental and moral development. The old adage was still true that "The teacher makes the school." The longer he taught the less did he believe in systems and in time-tables, and the more did he believe in the potency of the man himself. So his rules of management had been to get good men; have a clear understanding with them at first as to the general principles, purpose, and spirit of the school; trust them, encourage them to develop their own ideas, to watch the effect of their own plans, to adjust them, and perfect them. It was a good thing that the coming teacher was to be better equipped for his work; and all were glad that arrangements had at length been made for affording to pupil teachers for at least two years the great benefits of a University course of instruction. More, it would endeavor to bring it about that all teachers should be fairly paid. The difficulty was not so much to secure teachers with competent attainments, as to get them with power to govern, to manage, and deal wisely with growing minds and wills. When both public and private schools were well manned, there should be free interchange between their staffs to their mutual benefit. There had been some, and to great advantage. There well might be more. The young graduates from the University might be received into the public schools on liberal terms. After a period spent on probation to learn technicalities, and to show aptness to teach, they might well be allowed to leap over the pupil teacher stage and become qualified assistants. Some of them might have special knowledge, fitting them for special work. Some of the younger masters of the public schools could reinforce the staffs of the private schools most serviceably. Some of the more independent thinkers amongst public school teachers might like to set up a private school, and unhampered by regulations work out their own ideas. Why should not all these be allowed that freedom, and suffer no loss of status if either they chose to return to their original spheres, or the department saw fit to invite them back? He hoped that some day the whole teaching profession might so far work together as to be able to organise the whole system of schools, the whole of the educational forces of the colony. A body of teachers that had shown its ability to deal with the difficult problems of education would be more and more listened to on them. For they were not all solved yet. For example, some few years ago the State entered upon an extensive socialistic experiment; it offered education up to a certain standard to all without fee, the expense to be borne by the taxpayer. This undertaking had been coincident with, if not the cause of, a weakening of parental control, of the sense of parental responsibility, in at least some classes of the community. The fact was certain, however, that there were some unpromising elements among the young of our land. The first thing that teachers united would urge was that a more regular attendance at school should be secured. On the rolls of all schools, public and private, of this province there were 74,000 odd scholars; but the average attendance was only 52,000, or 22,000 were absent day by day. This state of things called aloud for remedy, and all teachers felt it keenly. The untrained, undisciplined boy was a menace to himself and to society. The associated teachers would speak on this matter with no uncertain sound. It might be that the special agencies of reformatory or truant schools were needed for some, but for most, the prime requisite undoubtedly was to secure steady, regular, unbroken attendance. When it was felt that teachers had made greater progress in mastering educational matters there would be less interference with schoolwork by the faddist and the doctrinaire. "Payment by results" was a phrase that appealed to John Bull's commercial instincts; but he was not logical enough to enquire into the meaning of his terms, and to ask for a definition of "results." And so a blight came upon the schools. He thought that each scholar was a grant-earning unit took much of the poetry out of daily duty.

The Right Hon. C. C. Kingston said he felt somewhat embarrassed owing to the many kind remarks which had been made regarding him, and in returning thanks he felt that since last Saturday he had done nothing else but return thanks. (Laughter.) He was delighted to accept their kind invitation to again address them. He thought it was a duty of all public men who were honored with such an invitation, to do what they could in the interest of the great cause of public education, and for the welfare of the teachers of South Australia. (Cheers.) They were responsible for the success of educational work, which he might be allowed to say was indisputable. (Cheers.) He was sorry he was unable to be present to hear the speeches made by the previous speakers, but he had read them and had profited thereby. He was sorry to miss the name of one who had been nobly associated with the cause of public education, and in degree it seemed to him second to none in South Australia, whose absence was absolutely inevitable under the circumstances. He alluded to Sir Langdon Bonython—(cheers)—who was at the present moment taking a well-earned rest in Europe. Might he return with health fully restored. (Cheers.) It had been his privilege to meet Sir Langdon when he first set foot in England. He could not think without the deepest gratitude of the pleasing circumstance that Sir Langdon was the man to speed him on his way when he left Charing Cross to come back to dear old sunny South Australia. (Cheers.) His kind farewells and the messages of remembrance to those in South Australia were even now ringing in his ears. All honor to a man such as that! They regretted his absence, but they wished him a pleasant trip, and that he would soon return with his health restored, when they would be delighted to welcome him. (Cheers.) The union had always had a good president, but he was inclined to think it would have been impossible to have a better president than they had in his old friend, Mr. John Donnell. He was the right man in the right place. (Cheers.) Whatever his hand found to do he did with his might. (Hear, hear.) He thought the gratitude for his sterling services to the Teachers' Association had been grandly expressed by the teachers in elevating Mr. Donnell to the highest office in their gift—(cheers)—and in circumstances which he envied him—an uncontested election. (Laughter.) It was all very well for them to laugh, but—"He jests at scars who never felt a wound." (Laughter.) He had heard of uncontested elections—(laughter)—he had read of them; he had dreamt of them; he had sighed for them—(laughter)—and—he had never got them. (Loud laughter.) He was not likely to have them, but, all the same, he had been placed where he was by the goodwill of the public of South Australia. (Cheers.) He would like to congratulate the retiring president and officers on the magnificent financial results which they had been able to exhibit for the past year. (Laughter.) They should think of the trouble in State affairs to which Treasurers of great experience had to go through in order to come out with anything in the shape of a surplus to satisfy her Majesty's Opposition. The duty of the Opposition was never to be satisfied, and they never were. (Laughter.) He did not know whether the union had got anything in that shape about the premises. (Laughter.) They had not. How was that magnificent result achieved? By management of the purse-strings of the society in such a way that the revenue five times exceeded the expenditure. (Laughter.) He was not speaking without book. He had read from the balance-sheet that they had received £50 and spent £10. (Laughter.) He could only say that he had never yet been able to command, amongst the many Ministerial positions he had occupied, the office of Treasurer, but should he contemplate seriously any assault on that high financial position he would be delighted to throw himself at the feet of the financial Gamaliels of the Teachers' Association, and prepare himself to produce to an admiring world conclusions and results such as they had exhibited, which he was sure would startle South Australia as nothing before had done. (Laughter.) Contrasting his position to-day with that of a year ago, he thought they might muse awhile and meditate on human affairs, particularly political. When last he had the privilege of addressing them they had in him united in the one humble person—Prime Minister, Attorney-General, and member of the House of Assembly. (Hear, hear.) Where were those glories now? (Laughter.) Every one departed. He would not say never to return, because they never knew what would happen in the future, but he mourned them not. The man remained—(hear, hear)—animated by the same sincere regard for the audience which he had the honor to address, and consoled by the reflection that that regard was reciprocated to-day—(cheers)—just as it was of yore. During the 20 years of his public life he had never so far as he was concerned had one uncontested election, and it seemed day by day to be receding from him. (Laughter.) The first election which he entered was the nearest to being uncontested. He had passed through ten or more during his whole career—three during the last 18 months—and what was the result? This—that instead of being in the old House—the popular Chamber—he found himself in the Council, which, if he remembered rightly, he had been in the habit at one time or another of criticising somewhat severely, at least as regarded the action of a certain majority in that Chamber. (Laughter.) At the same time he would tell them that he was glad to be there. He was there in the interests of the people—in the interests of progress and reform. (Cheers.) He had read with delight the utterances of their retiring president. What he preached and they practised he and a number of others preached and sought to practise in the great arena of constitution building. (Cheers.) He invited the sternest denunciation of the system which, as regarded the teachers—who were rightly entrusted with the training of the minds of the future citizens of the Commonwealth—was a scheme of disqualification for one branch of their local Legislature. (Cheers.) He had noted with delight the observation which fell from Professor Douglas, who had said that the teachers ought to seek to communicate to the children under their charge some

real love of humanity. No greater or grander principle could be advocated. He besought them to teach that to the children, and to those who were equal to themselves in years, but who had forgotten its dictates. Time and again had he preached the doctrine of health, happiness, and humanity. He came hot from the advocacy of a measure, whose chief objects were the furtherance of those philanthropic sentiments. Did they know the value of recreation and rest in order to return with renewed strength to their accustomed toil? They had holidays, but others had none—he alluded to the shop assistants—persons interested in the early closing movement, who had little or no opportunity for the interval of recreation or rest. (Cheers.) Although glorying in the possession of a good constitution and fairly good physique, he himself in his time felt the necessity for rest. They should remember the words of Professor Douglas and that those people were crying loudly for relief which had been long delayed. (Cheers.) Something had been said by a previous speaker on the subject of drill, and he could not help thinking that recent events and the stormclouds of the present moment should leave no room for doubt as to the necessity of drill and discipline. (Hear, hear.) He spoke as one having had some experience. (Laughter.) For ten years he thought it was he marched among the rank and file of the Defence Force. It would be a good thing if many more did the same. (Cheers.) He was placed in an awkward position in some respects. He remembered going as a full recruit. He was Attorney-General at the time. (Laughter.) He did not mind that, but when his Premier, in the person of the Hon. Thomas Playford, used to come down and watch him being put through the goose-step, and afterwards made scaring suggestions with regard to his inefficiency in that respect, they would probably come to the conclusion that his patriotism was superior to severe trials, as he continued in the ranks ten years and never got higher than sergeant! (Laughter.) Well, there were circumstances which consoled him. One was that at one time there happened a coincidence such as he thought had never occurred before in a British community—that in one person were united the positions of H.M. Corporal and also that of Minister of War. (Laughter and cheers.) He hoped that they would not think that his merits from a military point of view were not most transcendent—(laughter)—from the fact that he did not get higher promotion. He was in D Company, and a very good company it was, but the fact was he had been somewhat peculiarly circumstanced. If he had promoted himself when in office—Well! they said a good many nasty things about him without justification, but they would have said still more if he had done so. And when he was not in the Ministry he was leading the Opposition, and the Government would have been accused of tampering with the loyalty of the leader of the Opposition had they sought to thrust those honors upon him. (Laughter.) He maintained that just as they recognised that in time of need every man should be prepared to fight well in the defence of his country then the corollary was that in time of peace they should prepare themselves—(cheers)—while it was excellent for a variety of other reasons. (Hear, hear.) His Government had once proposed that every male on attaining a certain age should go through a course of military training. It would have been well if that had been carried. They had proposed that, but they did not carry it—they were shot out. Australians were patriotic, and, in common with Canada and South Africa, had displayed it in the recent war—(cheers)—and, further, had demonstrated that the Empire was not by any means divided. (Cheers.) When in London he made the acquaintance of Rudyard Kipling at the Royal Academy dinner. He had been anxious to meet Kipling, and Kipling had a similar inspiration, and so they foregathered. He would tell them the reason why Kipling wished to see him. He had met our First Contingent in South Africa. (Cheers.) There were English regiments in which he was greatly interested, and they had foregathered with the South Australians. The Australians had been sent as infantry, but were then mounted, and the two companies were warm friends. The English regiment insisted on introducing Kipling to those whom they called "pals," and the account Kipling gave him of the way they had distinguished themselves as riders and fighting men was intensely gratifying. (Cheers.) After this, during his stay in England, he took care to mention wherever he went that he was an Australian—(cheers)—and the reception that intimation met with showed that the English people entertained fraternal feelings of a high nature to their Australian brothers. (Cheers.) He urged the teachers to stimulate the love of patriotism in the rising generation. There could be no greater honor than that possessed by the teachers, namely, serving the State. Well had they served it. Long might they continue to do so. (Cheers.)

Mr. Wicksteed moved a vote of thanks to the Right Hon. C. C. Kingston and Mr. F. Chapple for their stirring addresses, which had been a grand finale to a grand series.

Mr. J. Lavington Bonython, in seconding the vote of thanks, said he felt greatly honored in having the opportunity of doing so. Although he had never attended their annual gatherings before he had always taken an interest in the useful work that was being carried out at these educational conferences. Everybody must to some extent feel himself practically concerned in the work of the State school teachers, for upon its excellence depended the fitness of the great majority of those who were growing up to take their part in the struggle of life. (Cheers.) Our system of primary education, he was satisfied, laid a splendid foundation for higher education in the arts and sciences. It was not only because he so heartily appreciated all they were doing in that direction that he was pleased at being called upon to second the vote of thanks, but also because he felt that it devolved upon him as a duty to represent his father in some capacity at the gathering. It was not necessary for him to enlarge upon the deep interest his father had always shown in educational matters—(cheers)—and he thought he could not do better than follow his example. Although his father was absent in Europe, and had, no doubt, plenty to occupy his mind there, he was sure that his thoughts were turning now towards their gathering, and that he regretted his in-