

EDUCATION COMMISSION.

Mr. CONEYBEER resumed the discussion of his motion for the adoption of the report on the Royal Commission on Education. The education of the inmates of the reformatories had been considered by the commission. So far as the Magill Reformatory was concerned he said the revelations made by the commission came as an unpleasant surprise to the public, to the Government, and to the State Children's Council, which was directly responsible for the good management of the institution. The commission found that at Mount Barker and Brooklyn Park homes for some of the reformatory boys, were excellently conducted by the Salvation Army and Roman Catholic authorities, at much less cost per head than at the Magill Reformatory, and an attempt was made to educate the boys. At the Magill institution practically nothing was done until lately. Some of the children had been sent there for truancy, among other things, yet had been still robbed of means of education. There was now a qualified teacher at the Reformatory. The cost of school buildings was a subject to which great consideration was given in all the States. In that direction the commission hoped to effect economies. The general opinion was that too much expense was incurred as a rule in new buildings, and that a great part of the expenditure in re-modelling old ones ought to have been avoided. Experiments should be made with a cheaper class of building. Another unfortunate class was the mentally defective, and the commission recommended that these should not be taught at the ordinary schools, but in some such institution at Minda by arrangement to be made by the Government.

The PREMIER—If you use Minda or any central institution you have to bring children distances from their homes, thus creating another difficulty. Feeble-minded children are often best left at home with the means of getting such knowledge as they can pick up.

Mr. CONEYBEER recognised that, but said that in the larger towns there were many feeble-minded who were a hindrance, even a menace, to the ordinary pupils at the schools. He had dealt generally with primary education. They had reached the time when boys or girls 13 years of age and not compelled to attend school any longer would begin to look for employment. In nearly all trades boys could not go into employment at 13, and the consequence was that, in the metropolitan area particularly, any position which happened to be vacant was taken, with the result that a lad who might have become a thoroughly competent tradesman began to earn his living as an office boy, message boy, or telephone boy, dependent for the future on the education he received in the primary schools. In the other States attendance at primary schools was compulsory until 14 years of age. The commission wished to make it compulsory here until the same age, not at the primary schools, but at the high schools, junior technical schools, agricultural schools, and domestic arts schools, for children between 13 and 14 who lived within three miles of those schools. They could not have those schools in all the towns, but if 47 per cent. of the population was in the metropolitan area they could reach the bulk of the children. The idea behind the recommendation was that when a child was 13 years of age and had obtained a fifth class certificate the department would notify parents that that child would pass to one of the higher schools abovementioned. It was also suggested that the teachers be asked to consult with the parents as to the school for which the children were best suited, and the children would be drafted off accordingly. The commission hoped thus to ascertain what the bias was in the case of each student. One year's compulsory attendance was provided for at those schools, which would give the children a knowledge of the realm of study that lay beyond the primary system and what the appetite to go on. Where boys had not passed the fifth class standard at 13, it was recommended to attend also an evening continuation school for two nights a week. The most successful boys in technical schools were those whose primary education had been most thorough. As the Education Department could influence the choice of a boy as to his future occupation, it would be in a position to direct the flow of labour into different trades. The department might point out to a parent that one particular trade was overcrowded, that the rates of pay in another were low, that another, requiring more sacrifice at the outset, would give a better return in the end, or that an agricultural life was the most independent. On the question of secondary education,

this was the first State to establish free high schools. They had the Adelaide High School, and 22 district high schools, with a maximum attendance of 3,000. The growth of the Adelaide High School had been wonderful, and it had a creditable record in the University examinations. The better education of such a proportion of the young people would give them a brighter outlook and increased opportunities, and would raise the tone of the community. The commission had made recommendations for putting the State system of secondary education on a more satisfactory basis. It was proposed to place that branch under the direct control of the Superintendent of Secondary Education, who would be responsible to the Director. At present there was no adequate inspection of the high schools, and consequently no efficient control of the teachers. It was proposed to call the secondary schools "high schools" and "State Colleges," the former being those which took children to the standard of the University junior, and the colleges those which prepared students for the senior and higher examinations. Practically all the teachers were young men, and the schools were attached to primary schools, the head masters of which, in some cases, were old enough to be the fathers of the assistants in charge of the secondary schools. The system was one under which friction and dissatisfaction were almost bound to arise. The placing of the better-educated high-school teachers in a subordinate position was not calculated to attract the best teachers to the secondary school service, especially when it was provided that those in charge of the high schools were classified as assistants, with very little more salary than the assistants in the primary schools received. The tendency now was for teachers with qualifications for high-school teaching to enter the teaching service of the primary schools, where the opportunities for advancement were greater. The commission resolved to recommend that so far as possible the primary and secondary school systems should be kept separate. The most important branch of the Education Department's work in the future will be technical education. It was significant not only to the individual, but in a most direct and practical way to the nation. A country became great only by the expansion of its trade and commerce, which were dependent on its natural resources and its manufactures, and the extent to which these were developed was governed largely by the technical education of the people. The hope of Australia lay in securing the best possible system of technical training. The members of the commission realized that too many youths were growing up without technical training of any kind, and that if they were asked to state their occupations they could only describe themselves as unskilled labourers. The remedy for this condition of affairs was greater opportunities for technical training and more direct Government control. The report showed that technical education at present, so far as the Government was concerned, was provided only at the Adelaide School of Mines and five small country Schools of Mines, to which a total £9,838 was voted annually. Having voted the money, the Government had no further control, and had no supervision of the expenditure. Each school acted independently of the others, and there was no uniform system of training. In some of the country schools the results did not justify the expenditure, but at one or two of them, and in the Adelaide School of Mines, much better results were obtained. It was questionable whether this form of education was best entrusted to honorary boards. Good work had been done by the Adelaide School of Mines, but was this due entirely to the Council? Equally good results had been achieved by the Sydney Technical College, where nearly 6,000 students were instructed by Government experts. The commission was confirmed in its conclusions by the receipt shortly before it concluded its labours of a paper on "Technical Education in Australia," by Mr. C. A. Sussmilch, which was read before the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. The commission practically came to the same conclusion, that the Adelaide School of Mines must become the technical university, and that the work now done at the institution should not be carried on also by the Adelaide University. The commission decided that there must be a uniform system of technical training for all Schools of Mines in the State, and that all must be under direct Government control. The commission also decided to make it compulsory on appren-

tices to attend technical colleges, and on that point recommended that all employers of apprentices furnish the technical branch of the department with the names of their apprentices, and that the department see that apprentices receive such training in technical schools as should be prescribed. That it be obligatory on employers to send their apprentices to technical schools one-half day per week during working hours and pay the school fees. That, as far as possible, high school buildings be used for the purposes of technical schools; and that a school committee or advisory council be appointed in connection with each technical school. The system of apprenticeship had broken down under changed industrial conditions, and few apprentices were now taught a complete trade. The only remedy was to make the attendance of apprentices compulsory at technical colleges in their employers' time as well as in their own, and at their employers' expense so far as fees were concerned. The employers had the services of apprentices at a very low rate, and would find, as had been found in Victoria, that they will be repaid over and over again by having the lads properly trained. Another branch of technical education to which little attention was paid in South Australia is that relating to agriculture. The teaching of a few boys at Roseworthy Agricultural College was practically all that was being done, and yet South Australia was more dependent on the development of her agricultural resources than any other State. The wonder was that they had done so well in agriculture. The credit was probably due to the excellent officers in the Agricultural Department, to the Agricultural Bureaus, and to the enterprise and intelligence of their farmers. The commission suggested that the Magill Reformatory and the land connected therewith might be used for an agricultural high school; but owing to the magnificent gift by Mr. Peter Waite of land for the purpose at Urrbrae that course need not now be followed for the present. The evidence in the other States confirmed the opinion that it was desirable to have such a school near the city, with the object of attracting city boys to a country life. The commission also suggested that another agricultural high school should be established at Swanport, near Murray Bridge, where there would be an opportunity of instructing boys in methods of irrigation, which it was likely would play an important part in the development of the State. The minimum age at which a boy could enter the Roseworthy College was 16, and those two high schools, which would no doubt be followed by others, would give ample opportunities to boys between 13 and 16. The commission also considered it would be a great advantage if a Chair of Agriculture were founded at the University, as suggested by the council of that institution. It was no doubt probable that the gift by Mr. Peter Waite to the University would help in that direction. So far as University education was concerned the members of the commission confined their attention to ascertaining in what manner the Adelaide University might be helped financially. The needs of the University were set before the commission in a statement, which showed it would require £59,800 to meet the University's requests, part of which would be annually recurring expenditure. In addition, the University asked for £17,825 as subsidy on expenditure on buildings erected between 1898 and 1903, when, owing to bad times, the claims of the University were not pressed; and it further requested a special grant of £6,000 to carry out much-needed improvements to the main building. The select committee approved of the special grant, and made the amount £12,000 instead of £6,000, the increase to be taken into consideration in the adjustment of the claim for £17,825. A leading suggestion of the commission was that the grant to the University be increased by £4,000, on the understanding that the amount would be devoted principally to the increase of the salaries of the professors and lecturers, who were not nearly so well remunerated as those of the other States. Another important decision was with respect to the constitution of the council of the University. At the suggestion of the commission, and with the approval of the council, Parliament in 1911 passed an Act by which five representatives of Parliament were elected to the governing body of the University, and it now considered that the University Council should be more widely representative, and therefore recommended that the University Act be amended to provide for the appointment of one representative each of the Chamber of Manufactures, the Chamber of Commerce, the Trades and Labour Council, the Adelaide Hospital Board, and the Education Department on the University Council. The question of whether the site of the University was the most suitable one was settled by the select committee in 1910. There had been sugges-