

some of the schools they found teachers endeavoring to control classes of from 60 to 80. The request for a curriculum board had also been approved in a manner which would preserve the responsibility of the department and at the same time allow the teachers to be heard. The Commission took the stand that the Director of Education must be responsible for the maintenance of the standard of education, and that the public must be assured that a boy or girl was as well educated after completing the primary course in South Australia as any boy or girl in the other States. Once the Commission thought of suggesting that the Chief Inspector of Schools and the superintendents of secondary and technical education should constitute the curriculum board, but on further consideration it was agreed that so far as the primary system was concerned the board should consist of the inspectorial staff, who were directly in touch with the work done in the primary schools, and a representative of the teachers. That would mean that there would be a conference of inspectors at least once a year to discuss educational matters, and that the teachers would have an opportunity of putting their views, so far as the curriculum was concerned, before it through their own representative. It was proposed that that body would act in an advisory capacity, and that the final responsibility would be with the Director. In view of the holidays now enjoyed by the teachers the request for long leave for recreation purposes could not be granted. In one of the earlier reports the Commission recommended that the title "provisional school teacher" should be abolished, and that the teachers of provisional teachers should be classified as public school teachers, with the object of allowing them to have all the rights and privileges of public school teachers, and such promotion in the service as they were able to win. For the benefit of those entering the teaching service they had also recommended the establishment of a teachers' training college, without which any system of State education would not be complete. In view of those facts it could not be said that the Commission had shown any lack of appreciation of the work done by the teachers, and it would be agreed that their requests had been dealt with most favorably. One of the earlier recommendations of the Commission was that the inspectors should be relieved of the duty of examining school children for promotion, and that that work be carried out by the teachers of all schools simultaneously. That recommendation had already been given effect to, and he had no doubt that it would work out as satisfactorily in South Australia as it had in the other States. The Commission felt that a teacher who was in daily contact with a child and was daily testing its work under normal conditions was better able to judge of the child's fitness for promotion than an inspector on one brief interview, when the real capabilities of the child might not be apparent. Of course, it might be argued that the tendency would be for the teachers to keep the children back in order to have a more competent class and show better results, and that at the desire of the parents the teachers might be induced to promote children who did not deserve it. However, that danger was more imaginary than real. The manner in which the teachers carried out their duties in that respect would be closely watched by the inspectors, and he felt sure that the advantages of the new practice would greatly outweigh any supposed disadvantages. He was proud to have been associated with the inauguration in South Australia of a system of medical inspection of school children, which was the direct result of the Commission's recommendation. Some of the members of the Commission met Dr. Gertrude Halley in Sydney, and they had evidence of the good work she had done there, as well as in Tasmania and Victoria. They could congratulate themselves that they had secured the services of a lady so well qualified for her work, and one who had already shown that her appointment was fully justified. He was glad the Government realised the value of her work, and that they intended to give Dr. Halley extra assistance, so that a much greater number of children and parents could have the benefit of medical inspection and advice. He had already referred to the fact that the inspectors had been relieved of the duty of examining children for promotion from class to class. The Commission recommended another important alteration so far as the inspectors were concerned. Hitherto it had been the practice to fill up vacancies in the inspectorial staff from the senior headmasters, who were, as a rule, well advanced in years. Evidence given before the Commission convinced them that the arduous duties of an inspector, especially when he was engaged in a sparsely settled district, called for the ser-

VICES of a certain proportion of younger men, and the Commission expressed their opinion in the following recommendation:—21. That the present system of appointing inspectors from the ranks of the senior teachers be altered; and as vacancies occur in the present staff they be filled by the appointment of assistant inspectors to the number of not more than half the total number of the inspectorial staff; that applications for these positions be invited from the ranks of teachers in receipt of £250 per annum and upwards; and that, subject to their being suitable for promotion, they be allowed such increases of salary annually as will place them in receipt of the salary paid to senior inspectors, namely, £475, at the end of not less than five years from the date of their appointment as assistant inspectors." That did not mean that the headmaster of a large city school would not receive the appointment if he was suitable for the work, but it gave the Government an opportunity of bringing in younger men as assistant inspectors, who should take the full title and salary of a inspector after serving a term of probation for five years. That recommendation was based largely on the Victorian practice. With respect to the point that the senior headmasters should have first claim to vacancies in the inspectorial staff, the following extract from the evidence of Mr. Tate was interesting:—"We insist, first of all, that a man must have definite academic qualifications, such as a university degree, before he is appointed inspector. We also insist that he must have an excellent record as a teacher and an organiser. As a rule with us, a man is appointed an inspector before the age of 40. There are exceptions to that, of course. When a man is chosen he is given a period of about six months' training before he is sent out in charge of a district." The Government had already acted on the recommendation of the Commission, and in the recent appointments they had read the recommendation just in the way that the Commission desired. In South Australia they had no system of inspection by the Government of private schools, either with respect to the attendance of the children or the efficiency of the teaching, and if they were to have an effective compulsory education law the private school should not be overlooked. The man whose children were enrolled at a State school might be, and occasionally was, fined for not sending them to school the required number of days, but what was done to the parent whose child was enrolled at a private school and failed to attend regularly? Again, who knew whether the education received at a private school was of the same standard as that which the State provided in its schools? Mr. Board, the Director of Education in New South Wales, put that point very clearly when he said:—"The question of testing the standard of education in private schools is bound up with the question of a really effective compulsory law with regard to attendance, and I fail to see how the State can have any guarantee that children are not merely attending school, but are attending efficient schools, unless there is some means of testing those schools. After all, compulsory attendance at a school is not the object of our legislation. It is compulsory attendance upon efficient instruction. A child may be attending at a school, and yet not be attending at any place where it gets efficient instruction. A law that provides for compulsory attendance at anything which chooses to label itself with the name of school is quite an inefficient and ineffective law, so that I do not think that any attendance law is satisfactory unless it carries with it such a test of every school in the State as will guarantee that that school is really doing efficient work; and to that extent I think that every school should have its work tested through the medium of Government inspection." According to the census figures for 1911 there were 49,413 children attending State schools and 10,634 attending private schools. The Commission desired to have some guarantee that those 10,000 children were regularly attending efficient schools, and on this point no one in South Australia at the present time had any knowledge. At the same time, the members of the Commission believed that the bulk of the private schools were efficient schools, and that the principals of them would desire to have the certificate of the Education Department that that was the case. On that point the Commission made the following recommendations:—8 "That the law with respect to the compulsory attendance of children between the ages of 7 and 13 be strictly en-

forced with respect to both public and private schools; and that, for the purpose of enabling the officers of the Education Department to carry out their duties thoroughly, all private schools be registered." 22. "That private schools, on the application of the headmasters thereof, be inspected by the inspectors of the Education Department with the object of testing the efficiency of the teaching; and that if the standard of education is equal to that of the public schools such schools shall be registered as efficient schools." If these two recommendations were given effect to, he felt certain that in time they would have no inefficient private schools, and they would know whether the children attending private schools conformed with the attendance requirements of the Education Act. Another class of children to the question of whose education the Commission gave earnest consideration were those in the sparsely-settled portions of the State. The late Mr. Williams informed them that South Australia was doing what no other State in the Commonwealth was doing—it was establishing a school where an average attendance of six children could be obtained. That no doubt met the case of a large number of children in the out-back country; but there were scores, if not hundreds, of isolated families so situated that they could not send their families to any school. In New South Wales a good deal was done by the department in conveying such children to the nearest school; but the Queensland system of itinerant teachers, which to some extent was followed in New South Wales, appeared to the Commission as the best means of reaching isolated families. The teacher travelled from home to home in a trap, and in some instances in a motor car, and he took all the necessary school books, and also a small library with him. He gave the children instruction for a few days, and set them work to do, under the supervision of their parents, until his next visit, which might be two or three months afterwards. One of the Queensland itinerant teachers, in describing the system, said:—"Broadly speaking, the parents take a keen and lively interest in the children's progress, and seem anxious that the children should avail themselves as fully as possible of the means of education which have been afforded them by the State. Having regard to the long distances to be travelled by the itinerant teacher, and to the fact that he is seldom able to visit any family more than four times in any one year, the results of this system must be regarded as satisfactory and well worth the money which is being expended by the State." When asked—How do you find your work received out-back? he replied:—"They are very glad to see me. Mothers have shed tears of joy because I have arrived at the house to teach the little ones. One mother, who had a family of eight, told me that she had not seen a woman for nine months, and that if I did not come along to teach the children she felt it would not have been long before she would have gone to an asylum." The education officers were of the opinion that there were not many districts in South Australia where this system of giving instruction might be introduced, but the members of the Commission felt convinced that information could be supplied by the police and survey departments to support the belief of the Commission that some hundreds of children might be assisted by means of itinerant teachers. They had accordingly recommended:—23. "That the Education Department appoint itinerant teachers to instruct children in sparsely-settled districts at their homes, and that enquiries be made from the Police and Survey Departments as to the districts in which such teachers could be employed." He regretted that the time at his disposal would not allow him to finish his speech, and he would ask leave to continue his remarks.

Leave was granted and the debate was made an order of the day for Wednesday, November 26.