

## SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT.

### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, October 29.

The President (Sir Lancelot Stirling) took the chair at 2 p.m.

### THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL VACANCY.

The Hon. F. S. WALLIS moved that the House adjourn until next day at 1.30 p.m. in order to make an explanation in regard to the appointment on the previous day of a representative of the Legislative Council on the Council of the University of Adelaide. Mr. Styles had said on a previous occasion that it had been the wish of the late Sir John Duncan that he (Mr. Wallis) should receive the appointment. He was not clear in his mind that that was exactly the position. He had understood from the late Sir John Duncan in the previous session that it was the desire of the Liberal Party in the Council that he (Mr. Wallis) should be the representative. He had pointed out that he was not a candidate and that the nominee of his side was Mr. Styles, and that while the Labor Party were perfectly willing to accept any nomination by the Liberal Party they expected their own nomination to be recognised. He believed Sir John Duncan thought the matter would be settled as in the other House by each side submitting the name of its nominee. The position that had now come about was that of five representatives of Parliament on the University Council, only one member was a nominee of the Labor Party. Seeing that in the House of Assembly the understanding was arrived at that each party should be fairly evenly represented, it was only right that in this Chamber the same thing should have been done. He hoped on future occasions the Council would not follow the course about which he complained. It might come about in time that another party would be in the majority, and might retaliate and deprive the Liberal Party of their rights. He wished something to be on record showing that this was not a matter which concerned him as an individual. It had reference to his party.

The Hon. E. LUCAS said the appointment made on the previous day was an absolutely non-partisan one. When the matter was originally before the Council it was discussed by his party, and they decided that one of the two seats on the University Council to be filled by members of the Legislative Council should be offered to Mr. Wallis, who was the leader of his party at the time, and was held in high esteem. The offer was conveyed by the late Sir John Duncan, and was declined. When the question was submitted for consideration again it was resolved to offer the position to a member of the Liberal Party. There was no party feeling on the subject. He believed that when the name of Mr. Styles was mentioned it had already been decided to offer the position to another member.

The Hon. A. W. STYLES believed that if some members on the other side had another opportunity of voting they would give his party recognition in connection with the appointment. When the necessity arose for another appointment he hoped his party would be recognised, because it was not desired that it should be made a party question.

The Hon. F. S. WALLIS wished to assure Mr. Lucas that he distinctly conveyed to the late Sir John Duncan the name of Mr. Styles as that of the member selected by his party before the final decision was arrived at.

The motion was negatived.

## REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION

### ADOPTION MOVED IN THE ASSEMBLY

STIRRING SPEECH BY MR. CONEYBEER.

In continuing his remarks on the motion that the report of the Education Commission be adopted, Mr. Coneybeer, in the Assembly yesterday, said that the advantages to a country of a complete system of education for its boys and girls were recognised by all. There was no one who did not regret that he did not make better use of the educational opportunities which he had, and that the opportunities afforded then were not what they were to-day, and what they would be under the education scheme which has been formulated by the Commission. He was pleased to hear the remarks of the Premier with respect to the Education Department in the course of his Budget speech. He had always believed that the Premier, who was the son of a South Australian school teacher, had the cause of education at heart, and he appealed to him to allow every opportunity for the recommendations of the Commission to be considered this session, so that any suggestions for improvements which members made might be embodied in the Bill next session. He deprecated any attempt to make the improvement of the education system a party question. (Hear, hear.) All parties must agree that it was the bounden duty of the State to endeavor to provide as good a system of education as any other country had, and, if that was not financially possible, they must be prepared to make sacrifices to attain, as near as possible, to an ideal system.

"The Commission did not slavishly copy the other States," continued Mr. Coneybeer. "We chose what we considered the best ideas and we have incorporated some of our own, which, in the opinion of the Commission, will place our system ahead of those of the other States. This practice of comparing the work of public departments in South Australia with those of the other States is not peculiar to the Education Commission.

#### JUSTIFYING THE REPORT.

"Coming now to the report of the Commission, I would like to say that I have the authority of an educational expert of wide experience for saying that, for thoroughness and breadth of conception of the requirements of the present day, it is the best report on education ever presented in Australia. There may be slight differences of opinion as to details, but I think I can safely say that the report as a whole has the unanimous support of the members of the Commission, and of the public, including many high educational authorities. The report as a whole provides for a system of education from the kindergarten to the University. It deals with four branches of education—primary, secondary, technical, and agricultural, and University education, and it provides for State control right up to the doors of the University.

#### KINDERGARTEN WORK.

"The Commission also considered the question of establishing State kindergartens, but decided not to recommend it. We preferred to leave the kindergarten work to private effort, and in this connection I should like to say we were much impressed with the excellent work being done by the Kindergarten Union, which at present receives a grant of £500 from the Government. The Commission resolved to recommend that the payment of the grant to the union be continued. The Commission was strongly urged by the late director to insist on every-day attendance, but on making enquiries in the other States, where that practice is in vogue, the Commission came to the conclusion that very little would be gained by it.

#### PRIMARY SCHOOLS REFORM.

"The principal suggestions for reforms in the primary schools came from the teachers, who were invited by the committee of the South Australian School Teachers' Union to make suggestions, which were put before the commission by the president (Mr. V. J. Payia). These suggestions, which, by the way, relate more to the teachers than to the children, and the decisions of the commission with respect to them may be stated briefly as follows:—The teachers complained that the conditions under which they worked, the size of the classes, and the length of the school day involve considerable strain on them, and they made a number of suggestions for reducing the curriculum and asked that in future the curriculum framed by the department should be reviewed by a curriculum board, on which they would be represented. The teachers also expressed dissatisfaction with the system of classification of teachers by a committee of three inspectors, and they asked for the appointment of a teachers' classification board, on which they would have representation, and an appeal board to deal with objections to the decisions of the classification board. Other requests were made for increases of salaries, especially for the headmasters of very large schools, and for long leave. The Commission gave sympathetic consideration to all the requests made by the teachers, not only because it wished to act justly towards them, but because it realised that the success of the education system depends on having a competent, contented, and loyal teaching staff. With regard to the question of strain, we carefully compared the conditions under which the teachers work in South Australia and in the other States, and we believe that when effect is given to the recommendations of the Commission the teachers will have little cause to complain of the strain put upon them, other than that which is inseparable from the teaching of children. The request for

increased salaries has been approved and given effect to, at a cost of about £13,000 per annum, and this has been given to those most in need of it and most deserving of it, namely, those teachers who were previously receiving less than £250 and the headmasters of schools with an attendance of 800 and over.

#### CLASSIFICATION BOARD.

"The request for a classification board, including a representative of the teachers, has been approved, and there will be an appeal board, consisting of a person or persons not in the employ of the Education Department. The length of the school day is practically the same in all the States, but the classes in South Australia, especially in the metropolitan area, are, as a rule, larger than those in the other States. We have recommended that the maximum number of children, for a male teacher, shall be 50, and for a female teacher 40. In some of the schools, we found teachers endeavoring to control classes of from 60 to 80. The request for a curriculum board has also been approved in a manner which will preserve the responsibility of the department, and at the same time allow the teachers to be heard.

#### MAINTAINING THE STANDARD.

"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 is as well educated, after completing the primary course in South Australia, as any boy or girl in the other States.

#### THE CURRICULUM.

"There will be a conference of inspectors at least once a year to discuss educational matters, and the teachers will have an opportunity of putting their views, so far as the curriculum is concerned, before it through their own representatives. It is proposed that this body will act in an advisory capacity, and that the final responsibility will 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.