

EVENING MEETING.

ADDRESSES BY GOVERNOR AND PREMIER.

Brookman Hall was again the scene of a large gathering in the evening on the occasion of the most important public meeting of the conference. His Excellency the Governor (Sir Day Hart Bosanquet) presided, and was supported on the platform by the Premier and Minister of Education (Hon. A. H. Peake), the Commissioner of Public Works (Hon. R. Butler), the Director of Education (Mr. A. Williams), the President of the Teachers' Union (Mr. V. J. Pavia), and numerous head masters and members of the inspectorial staff. The hall was prettily decorated in a scheme of red poppies and fern.

—Maintain a Vigilant Watch.—

His Excellency, who was warmly cheered on rising, said it was once again his privilege to welcome to their conference the teachers of the public schools, to whom the whole State was indebted for the admirable physical, moral, and intellectual development in the character of the children. The annual gatherings were of the highest interest, not only to those immediately concerned, but also to the general community. Throughout the world there existed a forward tendency in educational affairs, and although they prided themselves with good reason on their own system, it was necessary to maintain a vigilant watch upon the instructional and training systems of other countries, to make certain South Australia was not being left behind in the race. (Hear, hear.) Upon the wholehearted efforts of the teachers the State relied for the maintenance of a high position in the field of education, and the conferences were a powerful means to kindle public enthusiasm in their work. Should public interest languish, there was a danger that the teachers, however well qualified, might become listless and apathetic, and the result would be nothing short of a calamity.

—His Excellency's Observations.—

He was sure the teachers were proud of the Adelaide High School, also of the district high schools, so many of which he had seen and admired. (Applause.) He specially desired to congratulate those clever young men, so many of whom he had met, who, although under the authority of the head teachers of the primary schools, were practically grappling with the whole responsibility of the district high schools. He would like to refer to the comparatively new infant schools and kindergartens, which caused all who visited them to rejoice. Then came classes for training in domestic work and management. From them it was hoped that teachers would eventually be sent throughout the State to spread a knowledge of domestic welfare, happiness, and comfort. (Applause.)

—Evening Classes Commended.—

His Excellency spoke of the path which had been opened up from the smallest

visional school to the University, the Agricultural College, and the School of Mines by means of bursaries and exhibitions. He thought every one must agree that it was a highly satisfactory system. (Hear, hear.) Evening continuation schools had been established. They were intended to help young people to improve their general education, and there was a large choice of subjects. Although the work had been started in 24 centres the number of pupils was not yet 500, and there was only one such school in the metropolitan area, namely, at Hindmarsh. The system was, however, adopted only a year ago, and therefore it was hoped that when it became better understood it would be more flourishing. (Applause.) Professor M. E. Sadler, a great authority on education in the Motherland, had highly commended the evening continuation school as a means to cope with the educational leakage between the ages of 13 and 17 years. One need not go outside their own State for instances of examples of men who had risen to positions of influence and usefulness from the start in life they had obtained at such classes. Evening continuation schools might be of great service to the State, and must be regarded as one of the most important branches of the Education Department. They should be assisted and encouraged by all interested in the welfare of the boys. Evening technical education was given in Schools of Mines at six centres. He visited the Adelaide institution one evening recently, and it was a pleasure to see the crowd of young men working hard to improve themselves in the various handicrafts. (Applause.)

—Training Skilled Workmen.—

While every other branch of education was receiving attention, it appeared doubtful whether the training provided for workmen was as complete and thoroughly organized as it might be. With modern methods of production the workshop was generally an institution for turning out products at a quick rate, and as low a price as possible, not for the purpose of teaching men how to produce the goods. No one in the shop had the time or inclination to teach a boy his trade. The required number of skilled workmen, however, could be got only by training them, and that could be done by developing the work of the technical schools already in existence, and organizing technical classes in connection with the district high schools. It was quite evident from the figures at various technical establishments that there was a large opening for further development. (Applause.)

—“Wake Up and Keep Awake.”—

The Premier and Minister of Education joined in the congratulations already conveyed to the President of the Union on the success of the conference, which had been marked by great enthusiasm and high tone and spirit. (Applause.) He had thought on reading the ambitious agenda, embracing as it did so many points of policy and administration, that presently there would be little for Parliament to do in the matter of education, and a Director would presently become quite superfluous, while the Minister of Education, like Othello, would find his occupation gone. (Laughter.) However that might be, he was hopeful, and believed, that the deliberations of the conference had been attended by the strongest desire to promote the work of the service by the best possible means, and that the dominant note had been what was best to be done in the interests of the children and the teachers who were holding them in trust for the parents and the State. (Applause.) “Wake up and keep awake” was the best watchword from an educational standpoint, as it was the best way to increase the knowledge, effectiveness, and power of the people.

—The Educational Vote.—

Not many years ago there were some even in South Australia who were haunted by an anxious fear lest too much should be done in the way of education, and lest the boys and girls of that time, when they grew to be men and women, would know so much as to become quite useless members of the community. (Laughter.) It was formerly asked with grave apprehension how much could the State afford to spend on the education of its children. More enlightened enquirers of to-day, however, approached the question from a different standpoint, and asked how little it could afford to spend. The full assurance might be given that the educational vote of any civilized community could never grow less, although it might be more and more. (Applause.) The improved stamina, knowledge, and character of the children must be the superlative concern of those who were really patriotic and strong in a desire to strengthen the coming race—those who were the united heirs of all the ages, to whom it was the duty and pleasure of older folk to hand on the torch of knowledge with greater glow and greater brilliance. (Applause.)

—An Enlightened Democracy.—

Government by an educated and enlightened democrat, aided by the referendum and the preferential vote, might possibly be the last word in sociological science, but they might be perfectly sure that government by an uneducated, unenlightened, and selfish democracy would mean rabble, riot, confusion, and destruction. Of such great, vital, and national importance would education come to be regarded that he believed the time would arrive, and perhaps it was not far distant, when every one who had a genuine desire to learn, and by research perhaps to add to the sum of things that were known, would find the doors of all educational institutions standing open to him, to enter freely—without money and without price. The only test and requirement being, “Have you the grace and courage to persevere?” (Applause.) In the meantime what were they doing, and what did they propose to do?

—with the Education Commission.—

Parliament had appointed a royal commission, and on its travels members had heard leading men in other States speak with warmth and gratitude about the lead that South Australia gave in educational matters in the past. They have heard the present Director's work spoken of with great appreciation, and a hearty tribute paid to the magnificent work which was done by the late Mr. J. A. Hartley, whose work was much more than South Australian. It was done for the Commonwealth, done well and for all time, and was made the stepping stone for higher things. (Applause.) They had seen the solid and well-equipped University of Melbourne, and the queenly University of Sydney set in its wide domain, and the feeling was impressed on them that though perhaps the Adelaide University could never be quite like those, yet it is their duty to make it as like them as it can be. The University had already benefited by the work of the royal commission. (Applause.) They had seen the splendid technological schools of Sydney, the fine continuation schools, and fine evening classes, the great Hawkesbury Agricultural College, and the system of itinerant teachers in Queensland. Those things had been a great inspiration, and it might be hoped that what had been seen, and the evidence taken of what was being done elsewhere would suggest recommendations that would be of great value to South Australia. (Applause.)

—Competition and Strain.—

But what of the men and women behind the guns—the teachers? The Government desired that they might be encouraged in their work, for it had great appreciation. Much had been said about strain, but in general activities there was not going to be less strain. As competition became keener the strain upon each individual citizen would become much greater. With the progress of pedagogics the teachers' life would become still more arduous. School teaching would soon cease to be an occupation, and it will become a profession. The teacher of the future would need to know much of medical science, physiology, and psychology, and must become a deep student of child nature, if he wished to succeed. Those who went into the work simply as a living, or until some other avenue of life opened up, would not do much good, but those who made the teaching and training of the young their life work because of the good that was in it, would not go unrewarded, and it would be the duty of the Government to see to it that for good work and duty done there should be ample recompense. (Applause.)

—Small Country Schools.—

For some time past there had been great difficulty in finding a sufficient supply of teachers for the small schools in the country. This difficulty had been accentuated by the decrease in the minimum average attendance necessary for a teacher to be supplied. It had been 10, but was now six. Everybody recognised that the people who accepted the disadvantages and disabilities of pioneer work in the back blocks had claims upon the Government and the department, especially with regard to the education of their children. (Applause.) It had been a source of anxiety to everybody concerned to be confronted with what has appeared an insuperable difficulty in obtaining teachers for the children of those courageous people. He was pleased to say that the Government was at length overcoming the difficulty. That day he had been able to appoint 45 teachers to new schools or to schools which on account of the shortage of teachers had been closed for a considerable time. Those teachers had been appointed to schools as near to their homes as it was possible to arrange, and in every case the department had received assurance from the local people that the provision for new instructors' comfort was as good as they could obtain. (Applause.) Those facts indicated that the department was using every effort to provide for the comfort and convenience of the teachers who are being sent out to those back-block schools.

—Training the Teachers.—

Although the people in these 45 places have had their patience tested by being kept waiting so long, they would, he felt sure, be amply repaid by the superior knowledge and skill which the teachers have acquired in the six months' course of training which they had just completed. They had had the advantage of being taught in their theory and practice by some of the best teachers in the service of the department, and had obtained their practical training under the best conditions available in the State. Mr. Fairweather, of the Observation School, and his staff had entered into the work with the utmost enthusiasm, and he was assured that those teachers they were now sending to the small country schools were better equipped for their work than any they had ever had before. Seventy students had entered for the next six months' course, which began on Monday, so that by January, 1913, the department would be able to supply every small school in South Australia with a competent teacher. (Applause.)