

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY BILL.

In committee. Clause 10. Annual grant increased by £4,000.

Mr. HOMBURG said when they were considering this clause on a former occasion the Minister said he would give information as to the manner in which the money would be allocated.

The MINISTER of EDUCATION (Hon. F. W. Coneybeer) said, in view of what he had done for the teachers of the department in recent years, he felt that Mr. Homburg had not treated him fairly by suggesting that he was prepared to spend money on the University and overlook the claims of the public school teachers. The sum of £4,000 did not represent the amount asked for on behalf of the University, but it represented the unanimous opinion of the Education Commission, and it was intended to be used for improving the status of the professors and lecturers of that institution. The Commission did not suggest that it should be earmarked for any special purpose, but rather that it should be given to the council of the University, and that that body should be charged with its equitable allocation.

Mr. HOMBURG said he quite agreed with the statement made by the Minister of Education that the University exists in the interest of the people, but what he wished to know was to what specific purposes this money is to be applied. He thought these £4,000 could be more profitably employed in assisting our high schools and technical schools rather than the University. He did not object to the University of Adelaide having a fair share in the funds which the State can spare for educational purposes, but to tie the hands of Parliament for all time to give the University an extra £400 a year, while other educational institutions might be languishing for want of funds, was a great mistake. In other countries, and in South Australia too, the universities had benefited by the munificence of private citizens, but if it was found in future that the State is ready to come forward with funds in reply to every demand these private donors would say, "The University does not need any gifts from us." (Mr. Ryan—"The present needs of the University amount to £63,000.") The hon. member must know that it is a poor fool who cannot make out a good case for money. He had no doubt the University had made out a strong case to move the Education Commission to bring this proposal before the House. He had made up his mind suddenly to oppose the Bill, or kill it with factions opposition. No strong reason had been brought forward for singling out the University for a special benefaction. They would make a mistake if they allowed the sum proposed for all time to filter into the purse of the University, while there were other objects which had a greater claim.

The MINISTER of EDUCATION said the Government had devoted a considerable sum to the high schools, but nothing to what was required. After what Mr. Homburg had said he would look for his hearty support when further expenditure in this direction was proposed. The University was a part of the general education system, and it deserved a share of consideration, because of the great work being done. He wanted to push on rapidly with the work in connection with the primary schools, the high schools and the agricultural schools. He did not wish the public to think, however, the University was to be neglected.

Mr. ALLEN said it would be wiser to wait until they had received further information, if not the final report, from the Education Commission, which might suggest, for instance, the granting of a large sum to the Agricultural College. The money could be better spent on continuation schools. There would be no harm in letting the University grant stand over for a year or two.

The Hon. A. H. PEAKE desired to explain how the University Council would stand in relation to finances so far as the Government were concerned. There was something over £7,000 paid to the University as interest on the amount of the gifts and bequests that had been made to the institution by Sir Thomas Elder, Sir Walter Hughes, the Hon. J. L. Angus, and various other gentlemen. Most of the money held in endowment for the University was invested in Government stock, and so, by virtue of its endowments, the University was receiving something like 8 1/2 per cent. from the Government. That was provided for under section 15 of the Adelaide University Act of 1874, and under the indenture made by the Government of the day with Sir Walter Hughes. As the Minister of Education had said, the Education Commission would not take the responsibility of saying how the proposed grant was to be applied, but left the matter entirely to the University Council, with regard to increases of salaries and present expenditure.

Mr. BURGOYNE was glad to hear Mr. Peake's explanation, which ought to have come from Mr. Coneybeer. (The Minister of Education—"That has nothing to do with clause 10.") The Government had allowed 5 per cent. on the total amount of the bequests and donations, whereas 4 per cent. was the rate at present, so he thought the State had treated the University generously. More had been done for that institution than for some of the supplementary schools, such as the School of Mines, where boys and girls who could not afford to attend the University could go and get a splendid education.

The MINISTER of EDUCATION said it could hardly be stated with fairness that in dealing with clause 10 the information given by Mr. Peake should have come from him. His only purpose in introducing the Bill was to forward the best interests of the public. He held no brief for the University, although he recognised the good work that institution was doing. He did not want to push this grant through if the House wanted it held over, but it had been recommended and he was carrying out that recommendation. (Mr. Homburg—"This will block the other avenues for the expenditure of our money.") The working of the Education Department would not be interfered with, if that would result would like to see his proposal knocked out, but he had no fears in that respect.

The clause was passed. The title was passed. The Bill was reported, and the report adopted. The MINISTER of EDUCATION moved that the standing orders be suspended to enable the Bill to pass through its remaining stages without delay. Carried. Third reading.

Mr. RYAN, on behalf of the University Royal Commission, thanked the Government for having introduced the measure, and the House for having carried it. The Bill was read a third time and passed.

UNIVERSITY BILL.

In committee. Clause 4—"Annual grant increased by £4,000." The MINISTER of EDUCATION (Hon. F. W. Coneybeer), to Mr. Homburg, said the amount of money asked for had been considerably more than £4,000, but after mature consideration by the Commissioner it was decided to make it that. The money was asked for particularly to augment the salaries of professors and lecturers, to give them the same status as in other parts of Australia. The allocation of the money would be left entirely in the hands of the University Council. When the matter was last under discussion he spoke a little warmly to Mr. Homburg, who had done him an injustice in making reference to matters foreshadowed by the commission, which did not come under that Bill at all, and had been talked of prior to the present Government. Moreover, Mr. Homburg had no right in asking whether there were not other ways of devoting £4,000 than giving it to the University, and referring to the public schools and underpaid teachers. Such allusions might be taken by those outside who did not know the circumstances of the Bill, to mean that while he was prepared to be niggardly in regard to the public school teachers, he was ready to lavish money on the University. He did not think that the side issues raised in reference to the high schools and country teachers were fair to him, considering what he had endeavoured to do this year in connection with the working of the high schools and the encouragement of the teachers. The £4,000 was not earmarked, however, but handed over to be spent where the controlling body thought it could be used to the best advantage for the institution. The Bill was clear and concise as possible, and having been unanimously accepted by the commission and adopted by the House, he had confidence in leaving it to members to do what they thought best in the interests of the State. Mr. HOMBURG said he did not think there had been need for the Minister to get into such a state of mental excitement, but if the adjournment had done nothing else it had provided a few days for the atmosphere to cool down. The Minister had not yet given more information than when the Bill was last discussed. He had simply said the money was to meet the extra needs of the University, but for what did it want it? The University could apply the whole of it to any one of the proposals set out. The £4,000 could be more profitably employed in assisting the high schools and technical schools. They were tying themselves for all time when a period might come in which it would be better to give it to the other institutions he had indicated. Universities in Adelaide and in many places had prospered by private munificence, but if the State came in in that way, monied men would say there was no need for their gifts. No strong ground had been brought forward for singling out the University of Adelaide without safeguarding other institutions. The MINISTER of EDUCATION said he was not one to lavishly throw away money on the University. They had devoted a good amount to the high schools, but nothing like what would have to be voted. If what was now in question would retard the progress of the high schools he would not give a farthing to it. The work of the primary, high, and agricultural schools would be pushed on. Mr. ALLEN said it would be well to wait until the final report of the commission was presented. The Minister could give the poor boy a better chance through the ordinary and continuation schools. The Hon. A. H. PEAKE said that under the Estimates £7,000 was at present paid to the University as interest on the bequests of Sir Thomas Elder and Sir Walter Hughes for the endowment of the University, and most of the other endowments were invested in Government stock. The £4,000 now proposed would be a comfortable addition. Mr. BURGOYNE said the Government had been generous to the University in giving it 5 per cent. on the £150,000 of bequests. It had done more for it than for the School of Mines and School of Arts, for instance. The MINISTER of EDUCATION said he appreciated the work the School of Mines was doing, but the proposal had been made after serious consideration. He was prepared to postpone the matter if the House considered that necessary, and had no desire to rush the Bill. He did not see how the measure would interfere with a general advance in the scheme of education.

Clause and title passed. Bill passed remaining stages.