

Daily Journal

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Equal Rights Requested.

"If the recommendations of the Royal Commission are embodied in the proposed Education Bill, and those affecting private schools are adopted, we claim that those schools be placed on an equal footing with the State schools, and be given an equal share in all rights and privileges. (a) We ask that denominational representation on the Advisory Council be proportional to the number of children attending efficient schools, and also that denominational private schools be proportionally represented on any committee appointed thereunder, for the purpose of fixing examination standards and appointing examiners. (b) We claim that if private schools submit to examination for efficiency and are declared efficient, adequate remuneration be given for the secular education imparted. (c) If a grant is given to the Kindergarten Union, every school which does a like kind of work efficiently should be similarly recognised and subsidised by the State. (d) That teachers training for private schools have extended to them at the Teachers' Training College the same privileges as those accorded teachers training for the State schools, and that this be expressed in the Education Bill. (e) That private schools claim equal rights in the matter of equipment provision for physical culture instruction, general school requisites, medical inspection, or any other benefits supplied by the State. (f) That efficient private schools have the right to give leaving and other certificates of equal value to those of the State schools of pupils passing an examination of a similar standard. With regard to entrance to Government service, we prefer that the competitive system of examination be continued; but if this system be discontinued we claim that all certificates issued by efficient private schools be of equal value to those of State schools in qualifying for entrance to the State civil service, Federal civil service, and teaching service. That in the event of application for examination for efficiency by private schools the examiner be chosen from competent persons unconnected with the State Education Department.

"We object emphatically to the recommendation that the Director of Education prescribe examinations for students from other than State schools who wish to enter State secondary or technical schools. To quote John Stuart Mill:—"Though a Government may, and in many cases ought to establish schools and colleges, it must neither compel nor bribe any persons to come to them nor ought the power of individuals to set up rival establishments to depend in any degree upon its authorisation." In all such cases we claim an examination independent of the Education Department, which is in the position of a competitor.

Scholarships Question.

"We claim that all scholarships should be thrown open for competition to all children of citizens of the State. In respect to the matter of scholarships, we bring specially under notice the Queensland scheme, which, with the advice of the Executive Council, the Governor of that State has approved, and which will come into operation as from January 1, 1915, viz.:—

"A scholarship with a currency of two years will be granted to every candidate who makes not less than 50 per cent. in the annual scholarship examination, and the scholarship will be available at any State High School, Technical High School, grammar school or other secondary school approved by the Governor-in-Council. The scholarship will be extended for two years if the holder secures an approved pass in the Queensland Junior Public Examination, and for a further (or fifth) year if the holder secures an approved pass in the Queensland Senior Public Examination.

"We further claim that in all examinations carried out in connection with scholarships the papers should be set and the examination conducted by an examining body independent of the Education Department in cases, in which the pupils of State and private schools compete against each other. We also object to the Education Department prescribing the standards and framing the regulations for such examinations. Such a procedure would unduly handicap students who are not trained under the system of the Education Department."

The Premier's Reply.

The Premier thanked the federation for having forwarded to him a type-written statement of their requests. He was pleased to receive the deputation, he said, as he was to receive any body of electors who considered they had matters of importance and concern to the State or themselves to lay before the

Government. They knew from the intimation which had already been given to Parliament, that it was not the intention of the Government to proceed this session, at all events, with the proposed Education Bill. The causes of that were well known to every taxpayer, and had operated to prevent progress not only with that measure, but also with such as the Civil Service Bill, Police Superannuation Bill, and the Bill for the appointment of another judge. All those measures had had to be put in the one category of legislation, which involved a great deal of public expenditure, which the State at the present time was unable to bear. He noticed it had been stated in the press that the Government would have done well to have gone on with those Bills, and to have suspended the Acts, but the Ministry did not think it wise to spend the time of Parliament upon measures which could not be put into effect.

Commission's Recommendations Modified.

No doubt they had studied closely the report of the Education Commission, and from the statements of Archdeacon O'Neill he gathered that they were not pleased with the recommendation. In settling the measure—because, in respect to the proposed Bill the matter had been pretty well settled—he had found it necessary, after consultation with his colleagues, to greatly modify many of the recommendations. He regretted that they could not proceed with the Bill, because they had to recognise as a Government that it was their duty to see that the State should not be behind other States in the Commonwealth regarding educational matters. At present South Australia was somewhat behind in that respect, and the Government aimed at getting abreast, if not in advance, of the States whose systems the commission had examined. He noticed in reading their requests that reference was made to John Stuart Mill. He was afraid he had thought Mill was dead, as people had departed so far from him in these later years. To hear him quoted as an authority came as a reviving and refreshing breeze from the south.

Principles of Education.

They must know that the State up till now had stood firmly to three main principles regarding the education system—free, compulsory, and secular. The word secular had carried in the minds of most people the connotation of no State aid to religion. That principle had been attacked from two sides—by those who wished to introduce religious teaching or Bible reading, which was its modified expression, and by others who desired to get a capitation grant for private schools in which religion was taught. He did not think, speaking for himself, that either side expressed the sentiment of the community. Indeed, he did not think the people were prepared to depart from any one of those three great principles. So soon as a favorable opportunity presented itself for taking up the Education Bill again the Government would be pleased to give the fullest consideration to the representations which the deputation had been good enough to put before him.

Making Scholarships Available.

A Deputationist—Regarding our request respecting scholarships a good deal might be done by regulation.

The Premier said the matter of scholarships was before him. He had given it a good deal of consideration, and he was not averse, nor did he think his colleagues would be averse, to throwing open the whole of the scholarships to public competition. (Applause.) That was based on the ground that anything which extended beyond the primary system of education and was given in the way of prizes or anything of that kind, should become a reward for merit, and that being the case those prizes should be open to all who could and would compete for them. It was in that frame of mind that the Government would consider the new regulations. He had had the greatest admiration for the work done by

the private schools of the State, whether by the denomination represented that morning, by the Lutheran Church, or by the Church of England. They were each doing great auxiliary service to the State system, and when it came to awarding prizes they should all be considered.

In reply to Archdeacon O'Neill he promised to consider the matter of having the children at private schools examined by the State medical officers who visited the public schools.