

Mr. Goyen moved, "That the Conference hopes to have the honour of the attendance of the Minister for Education (Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon) during its sittings."

Agreed to.

On the motion of Mr. Bakewell, seconded by Mr. Spencer, it was agreed, "That Mr. Lee, late Inspector of Schools, Wellington, be invited to attend the Conference"; and on the motion of Mr. Hill, seconded by Mr. Spencer, it was agreed, "That the Rev. Mr. Evans, Chairman of the Victoria College Council, be also invited to attend the Conference."

On the motion of Mr. Strachan, seconded by Mr. Petrie, it was agreed, "That when a division is called for it be decided by a show of hands."

The Chairman announced that he had received a letter from Mr. J. S. Goodwin, Inspector of Schools, Auckland, stating that he had been ill for some weeks, and had not yet recovered sufficiently to undertake the necessary journey to Wellington to attend the Conference.

The Chairman then delivered the following address:—

Gentlemen: Although it was felt when we last met that it would hardly be practicable to hold these general conferences at more frequent intervals than three years, yet I am not at all sure that there would not be some advantage if a smaller body—consisting, say, of six individuals named by yourselves from among yourselves—were to meet oftener, either annually, or from time to time when special need arose, to consult with and advise the Department on questions of general interest and importance. This, I suggest, could be arranged without in any way preventing an expression of opinion from any or all of the rest of the Inspectors on any important matter.

I trust that the present Conference may result in as much mutual stimulus to ourselves and in as much benefit to the educational system of the colony as the last Conference held here.

The changes that have taken place since 1901, not only in our own system, but in almost all the educational systems of the Empire—it may even be said of the whole civilised world—are very great indeed. Causes that were in operation then, and had already begun to affect us in New Zealand, have been operating more and more rapidly. The new syllabus, which is one of the most important of the subjects appearing on the order-paper, is only one among many signs of the fundamental change that is taking place in the realm of education.

The British mind is thought to be a pre-eminently practical mind, and accordingly when education began to be organized by the State the British public and the statesmen who carried out its will sought to insure efficiency in education by the testing of the product by means of examinations, even paying the teacher directly by the results of the examination; or, what was almost equally vicious, making his promotion depend indirectly upon such results. Such a belief in the possibility of measuring educational values by examination took possession of the Anglo-Saxon mind that, acting in conjunction with other influences, it tended to confine the attention of teachers and examiners to those subjects and those parts of subjects that could be most easily tested by examination, and syllabuses and programmes and methods were more and more perfected as instruments for a system that concerned only some of the powers of the mind and neglected others of the highest importance, and thereby became more and more detached from the facts of life and the true nature of the child. If instruction alone were the aim of education, then it would be no exaggeration to say that in the hand of its most skilful exponents the system accepted in almost every British land not many years ago was not far from perfect. Doubts had, however, existed in the minds of some of the most thoughtful from the very first, and the failure of the perfected scheme to produce really educated men and women gave weight to those doubts.

I need not trace the gradual process by which I suppose we have all passed from the mental position in which we regarded, or, at all events, acted as if we regarded, education as the imparting of so much information, useful or otherwise, to the present position, in which we concentrate our attention upon the careful development and direction of the child's natural activities and powers, and to the building-up of the character. You, gentlemen, are familiar with that change in our educational outlook. All the best teachers have, step by step, been led to change their point of view, and have been altering their methods accordingly. To you, therefore, the change, though rapid, has been an *evolution* in educational ideas and methods. To others who have followed it less closely, or have allowed themselves to fall behind, the change appears as a sudden and complete *revolution*. Men do not put new wine into old bottles, and therefore the time had come to cease patching and repairing the old syllabus, into which some part of the new ideas had been inserted in previous amendments, and to recast the syllabus entirely. The change was inevitable unless New Zealand was to be content to be left behind in the educational contest, and I am glad to see that the objection to the new syllabus, as shown by the resolutions on the order-paper, relate merely to matters of detail. The important point—and on this too much stress cannot be laid—is not the amount or number of things that are taught, but the spirit, character, and method of the teaching in relation to its purpose of developing the child's powers. Personally, I do not care one straw how many or how few subjects you include in the syllabus, provided you include enough to enable you to develop these powers in the right way. We now believe with Fröbel, and others of the most enlightened of the world's educators, that the child will learn best, not so much by reading about things in books as by doing—that is, exercising his natural activities—by making things, by observing and testing things for himself; and then, afterwards, by reasoning about them and expressing his thoughts about them. We believe that the "new education," as it is called, will make not only better workmen and better scholars, but better men and better citizens than the old education ever could produce.

With the change in the method of teaching, and the relegation of examinations to their proper subordinate place (when they are for the most part conducted by the teacher), there comes a corresponding change in the work of the Inspector. You will pardon me if I call especial attention to two clauses of the new regulations—viz., clause 9 and clause 11. Clause 9: Please observe that clause 9 relates to his annual visit, not merely to his inspection visit; that then it is "to this end"—namely, to investigate the character of the teaching and of the degree to which the intelli-