

As a result of the increasing population of the North Island, the distribution of Special Schools has become a vexed question, which, since 1910 has introduced a very undesirable element into the discussions of University affairs at the Senate meetings and elsewhere.

For similar reasons arising mainly from their past history, the relative amount of Government support to the four institutions has been a difficult question. From the beginning Otago University and Canterbury College possessed land endowments; while, on their foundation, as recommended by the Royal Commission of 1879, the University Colleges of Auckland and Wellington each received a grant of £4,000 per annum to make up for insufficiency of endowments. From 1909 this was increased by £1,200 and £1,500 a year respectively. From 1907 each of the four colleges received in addition a "specialization" grant of £2,000.

Meanwhile, a movement grew which served for several years to focus attention upon the University and to make its teaching and constitution the subject of vigorous debate. This was the so-called "University reform movement," which came so prominently before the public in 1910–13. The objects of the movement were various: some were academic, some financial, some had relation to the constitution of the University. On certain points, more particularly the method of examination, the vigour with which the agitation was conducted begat a similar vigour of opposition, and resulted in bitter and prolonged controversies, of which we do not yet see the end. But the "reformers" did an immense service to higher education in the Dominion, by showing that the colleges were institutions of national importance, and should be supported by the State in a more regular and systematic manner. In some directions the movement was a revival of the old debates on University constitution that had accompanied the birth of the New Zealand University in 1870–74. The British institutions that had served as a model for the New Zealand University of that time had since altered the constitution they then possessed. Nearly all the Federal universities of Britain had changed their form; and one of the leading points at issue in this new movement was how far the unique geographical circumstances of the New Zealand University, and the wide distribution of the community it had to serve, justified it in retaining a constitution of which it was almost the sole remaining example.

A pamphlet setting forth the views of the association was published, containing the opinions of various authorities throughout the world on the several points submitted to them. In 1910 the association petitioned Parliament to set up a Royal Commission to inquire into the state of the University administration and education in New Zealand. Consideration of the petition was deferred for further investigation until the session of 1911, when the matter came before the Education Committee of the House of Representatives, of which Mr. T. K. Sidey was chairman.

The main defects found by the Reform Association in the New Zealand University constitution and methods may be classed as follows:—

- (1.) The external examination system.
- (2.) The elimination of the professorial staff from all active share in the framing of syllabuses for degrees.
- (3.) The constitution of the New Zealand University as a purely examining body, and the want of close relation between the University and the Colleges.
- (4.) The absence of any considered and co-ordinated scheme for placing the finances of the colleges on a sound basis.

The Education Committee, after exhaustive inquiry, reported "That a case had been made out for reform in the constitution of the New Zealand University, more particularly in the direction of utilizing in a larger measure than at present the professorial staffs of the colleges in the framing of curricula and syllabuses, and in the conduct of examinations."

The Committee further recommended that the Inspector-General of Schools, Mr. Hogben, be asked to report on the financial position of the University colleges and on the library facilities. This inquiry was made in 1912, and the Education