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LIFE WITHOUT EUCLID AND LATIN

THERE was a flutter, and almost some commotion, in educational pigeon lofts the other day when a newspaper announced that Euclid, Algebra and Latin were about to disappear from Secondary Schools.

The report, as it turned out, was a kite. No decisions had been made, nor is it at all certain when they ARE made that they will correspond with the outline given by that newspaper.

But changes are under consideration, and when the Committee to which the new syllabus has been referred makes its report, the result, the Minister says, may be "the greatest advance in education in New Zealand for more than a generation."

Well, great advances are always exciting news. They start the bells ringing in war—if they continue—and they start all our tongues wagging if they happen at home. So we have made a few inquiries to see who will weep to say good-bye to Euclid, Algebra and Latin. They were not very searching inquiries, and they were not, in general, addressed to important people, though they were in one or two cases.

This is what we found (the opinions are in two groups: those from people on the inside of the educational structure, and those from people on the outside).

From The Inside

THE sort of changes in Secondary Education that I imagine are envisaged pretty generally by the teaching world follow naturally on the changed syllabus for University Entrance," said a schoolmaster. "There will be no compulsory subject except English. This does not mean that Latin, French, Mathematics and all the rest will not be taught, but that the emphasis upon them will be quite different. It should abolish the drudgery spent on subjects by pupils who have little interest in them. But we teachers look for other changes. To my mind there are three things to consider—education for personal living, education for citizenship, to enable the individual to fit into the community, and thirdly, the development of the worker—that is, more specific training for a vocation. I would put them in just that order, placing education for personal living first of all. The difficulty of course is to translate these theoretic ideas into school syllabuses. It concerns the whole running of the school. I should think that there is a good case for making social studies the care of the curriculum."

WOMAN TEACHER

"MY job is to teach adolescent girls, and that requires far more extensive research than has so far (to my knowledge) been given it," said a woman teacher with many years' experience of teaching in girls' secondary schools. "In the early days of girls' secondary education the aim was, with certain modifications, to give girls the same sort of schooling as the boys. Actually it never has worked out quite the same. Perhaps it is a Victorian carry-over that mathematics is nearly always badly taught in girls' schools. I suspect the Victorian tradition that mathematics is allied to commerce and that commerce is unladylike, is more responsible for this than that women are, by reason of their sex, worse at maths than boys. But all the same the main trend of what we teach our girls is the same as for boys. We encourage them to take up careers and to go to University—and then when they have had their taste of this life, which they usually enjoy, we expect them to marry and settle down, bring up children and be quite content with house-running and baby-minding. There are two courses open: We may equip our girls to be wives and mothers at the sacrifice

of the few who will never be either. Alternatively we can continue to equip women to take an equal place with men in life, but in that case we must envisage a change in our social organisation which would allow for women after marriage to continue their work and interests outside the domestic sphere."

PARENT

"I SUPPOSE all of us who are parents of schoolchildren are continually faced with such embarrassing questions as 'What's the use of Algebra?' or 'Why must I do Latin?'," said a parent who is a former member of a Secondary School Board of Governors. "I would be prepared to defend the continuance of these subjects, especially where they are well taught. Of course the fact that they are being dropped from the official syllabus may have the effect of improving the standard of teaching. Incidentally those children who are good at academic subjects will have a far better chance without a big tail of drudges in each class. I think, too, that there could be much more co-operation between school and parents. Parents have a useful contribution to make in the shape of criticisms and suggestions, but my experience is that these are not welcomed. School, parents, and the community should work together."



Who will weep to say good-bye to Algebra?



HEADMASTER

THE headmaster of a big High School was reported a few days ago as having said that foreign languages were no use to the bulk of the 76 per cent, of primary school children who continued their education. "A mathematician might become an engineer; to be taught science might make one a scientist; but before one who has been taught languages lies merely the prospect of teaching languages. This is an educational racket," he said.

STUDENT

"MAYBE teaching languages is a racket," said a student about this, "but there will always be a group in every secondary school for whom languages should be provided—I mean the section of pupils who are going to need something more than a flow of vernacular when they leave."

From The Outside

"WHAT do I think about changing the syllabus for post-primary schools?" echoed a builder and contractor when questioned. "Well I never went to Secondary, and I always regretted it and have been trying to catch up on what I missed ever since. I would like my boys to do Latin, Algebra, Euclid, French and go to University. I think a University education is a fine thing, but you have to work to get there, and it's no good trying to get round it by all the highfalutin' expressions that people use these days. What is it? Computation instead of arithmetic? Social sciences instead of history and geography? Aural training instead of music? Oratory instead of debating? No, I don't mind if teachers want their old subjects dressed up in new clothes—but I want the new clothes to wear as well as the old."

HOUSEWIFE

"I WOULD be afraid if the tendency were to turn all our children into carpenters and engineers and our girls into typists," replied a housewife. "The practical side of education means so often just the vocational side—a start in some sort of career and profession. This is good up to a point, but not when the bare bones of living are neglected. The product of our educational system is not exactly illiteracy, but certainly an inability to speak clearly and coherently. You get on the one hand the obscurity of 'officialese,' on the other the wordlessness of broadcasts from our boys overseas. The people who

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