

In our opinion, this system of taking private pupils is radically wrong, and should not be permitted in future. We think that, as the Director is a paid servant of the Government, he should not be allowed to receive direct remuneration from the parents or guardians of pupils. We can conceive that the greater infirmities of some of the pupils might render special treatment or extra attendance necessary in certain cases; but we think that such treatment or attendance should only be allowed after report by the Director to the Education Department, and that the parents or guardians should arrange with the department and not with the Director.

II. As to the work done by the boys, it has not been shown that they are worked too hard. We agree with the opinion expressed by the Director that it is advisable, considering the limited mental capacity of the pupils, that they should have some manual labour provided for them—that it is, in fact, a necessary part of their education. The evidence certainly does not bear out the assertion that more attention is paid to the work of the house and garden than to the mental improvement of the pupils. We agree in objecting to the boys being engaged too much in house-work. They have been made, for instance, to scrub floors and occasionally to wash clothes, which latter is in no sense a suitable employment. But, as to the garden and farm operations, we think that even more attention might with advantage be given to them than has been the case hitherto. The garden which we inspected shows no great amount of care bestowed on it; and it seems that the Director declined to allow a pupil to learn to milk on the ground that a learner practising on them might injure his cows. We recommend that in future the employment of the boys in as well as out of school should be governed by regulations to be drawn up by the Education Department. We suggest that the occasional employment of a practical man to assist and direct the gardening would be advantageous.

III. As to the alleged supply of improper food: We find that in 1891, for a short time, salt mutton from the Director's farm was an article of diet. It is also stated that about that time there was a lack of sufficient vegetables. Complaints were at the time made by the assistant teachers, but for a long time past there has been no cause of complaint. The Director has since the foundation of the institution contracted with the Government to supply the pupils and teachers with board, the present scale of payment being £33 per head for pupils and £40 for teachers. We learn that the Director has now voluntarily given notice to the Government that he is no longer willing to contract for the board, and that the Government have accepted such notice; and, on considering the management of the institution as a whole, we think that it would be better that the catering should in future not be under the management of the Director, chiefly for the reason that, as the number of pupils is now considerable (forty-seven), the superintendence of their tuition should occupy his whole time. At the same time we fear that difficulties must arise in making fresh satisfactory arrangements, owing to the buildings of the institution not being such as to enable the family of the Director to live apart from the pupils.

IV. As to the question of teaching trades to the pupils: At first sight this suggestion would, we think, meet with unanimous approval, but on consideration it is not so evident that a move in this direction is at once desirable. We learn from the Director that, of the thirty-one boys in the institution, there are at present only six who are suitable in point of age and other qualifications to be so taught; and we think it probable that there will not at any time be a great number who could successfully be prepared for apprenticeship to trades. It also appears that they could not be taught at Sumner unless the Government were willing to supply special teachers at considerable expense. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the Government are pledged to afford the boys an opportunity of learning trades. (See Appendix to Journals, 1880, H.—1E.) The difficulty in the way of giving such instruction where the institution now is suggests another reason for removing it as soon as possible to a more convenient site. In the event of the Government deciding upon the erection of a suitable building, we strongly recommend that a site be chosen near a large town or near a railway-station whence town can be reached in a very short time, and that sufficient land be attached to it to afford space for a garden and a small farm. Here the boys would be able to receive excellent instruction in at least the rudiments of garden and farm work, pursuits which, we believe, will be found most applicable to the majority, while those who show an aptitude for mechanical employments may be taught either by special teachers at the institution or under arrangements made for their instruction in town. It is also very necessary that full provision should be made at the institution for the instruction of the girls in various branches of household economy, such as sewing, with cutting out—which latter appears not to be taught at present—cookery and laundry-work, and also occupations which would assist them in earning a livelihood, such as dressmaking, lacemaking, &c.

V. Mr. Fish's charge which we have called No. V. is that "no commensurate results have been obtained for the large expenditure on the institution, amounting to about £80 per annum for each child." The amount—approximately correct as stated—is no doubt large. We think, however, that in the case of deaf-mutes the relative cost per head of a boarding-school education must be more than in the case of ordinary children. The report of the late Royal Commission shows this to be the case in England. The fact that parents—men having the means to pay—living at Melbourne and elsewhere are willing, as the evidence shows, to pay not merely £80 per annum, but larger sums, goes to prove that they consider the education worth the money.

But we are of opinion that it will be found possible in the future, by careful management, to reduce the cost per head. And in this connection we may refer to the buildings occupied by the institution. Since its establishment in 1880 it has always been carried on in temporary premises rented for the purpose, which have been changed from time to time as the number of pupils increased. At present there are two houses, each enclosed in its own grounds, but 500 or 600 yards apart—large houses certainly, but not containing any room large enough for a dining-room for the pupils, and wanting in conveniences, such as ventilators, fire-escapes, bath-rooms, closets, &c., which the institution should have. For these two houses the Government pay as rent £450