

Of course, the benefits derived will depend very largely upon the proper carrying-out of the system. We may make our system as good as we can make it, but unless it is properly carried out all our efforts will be in vain. I have not touched on all the points of the general scheme, but you will see that there is some kind of order in what may have seemed to some minds detached measures.

The question of scholarships and examinations for scholarships you have been asked to consider, and it is obviously desirable that all the Boards should endeavour to have uniform regulations—except so far as the local conditions are different—to work in with the general system. I believe that in this respect you are prepared to make practical suggestions to this Conference and also to your own Boards, for whom you act as expert advisers. The technical scholarships to which I have already referred provide, for those who have left the day-schools, a continuation of their education on general and technical lines free of cost.

We have moved on a great deal in relation to manual instruction in the schools. The amount of manual instruction being given now is something like six times as much as it was three years ago. The extent of technical education has also increased. Some people are rather—I was going to say impatient—that it has not increased more rapidly; but, unless we can get qualified instructors, it is not well that we should hurry. Progress must be gradual if it is to be sound. But technical education has made substantial progress in some parts of the colony, and the money voted by Parliament, I venture to say, has been very usefully and profitably employed. I hope we shall make the system thoroughly sound in the future. People sometimes speak of a need for *technical education* in primary schools. Evidently they are not clear as to the distinction between manual instruction and technical education. We all want the hand and eye developed in connection with the brain of the pupils, and we want them developed in such a way that the pupils are made ready for the pursuits they will be engaged in afterwards, especially those that belong to their own particular districts; and that fact will determine the science-teaching and the handwork in our primary schools. But children of tender years in our primary schools are hardly in a position to receive what in the real sense is called “technical education.” That, I think, we all recognise; but it is our business to make ready for their technical education at a later stage by a suitable scheme of manual instruction. The Department has worked very hard to make such regulations as will render it easy for manual instruction to be taken up in the schools, and we may safely say we have in some degree succeeded, because the amount of manual instruction is at least six times as much as it was three years ago. I think you will agree that that is a remarkable advance to have made in three years. There is one point in connection with the subject I shall touch upon—namely, this: Sir Norman Lockyer—and his opinion is entitled to the highest consideration in view of his position as President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and his long connection with various branches of science—has expressed the opinion that the commercial supremacy of the British Empire depends very largely on the scientific education that its citizens receive. He has laid great stress on the higher branches of that education. I think it is equally important that we should lay stress on the beginnings of that scientific instruction. You will never have the material for the higher instruction if you do not give attention to the lower stages of instruction. We cannot pretend—I speak as one who for many years taught science to children of all ages—to give what a scientific man would call “scientific instruction” in the primary school; but we can give the child the beginnings of scientific method in the primary school. In fact, the child begins it himself—the spontaneous exercise of his own activities and powers, his own curiosity and his own desire to observe are the beginning of it, and we have to direct these in such a way that he really begins to acquire what may be truly—though in a very humble way—called the beginning of the scientific method. I think we should keep that aim before us, in order not only to develop the mind of the individual child, but also to lay the foundation of that scientific knowledge that will enable the citizens of the Empire to maintain the supremacy that their own genius and their own industry, and perhaps their natural advantages, have given them in the past.

But all our labour will be in vain unless we train our teachers. When I say we must train our teachers, I do not mean train them only to enable them to pass certain examinations and gain certain certificates; but we must inspire our teachers with the spirit of the new education, and of the best in the old education—inspire them with the true spirit of the new education in such a way that they will carry out their duties willingly, heartily, and intelligently. I am glad to see that the resolutions you passed at your last Conference are now in the process of bearing fruit; that the training institutions that already exist will be put into such a position that they will be able to do their work more efficiently than they could possibly do it in the past; and that training colleges are to be established in the two other chief centres, so that in future pupil-teachers and all others who are willing to enter the teaching profession, whether in the primary or in the secondary schools, will have an opportunity of being properly trained in the science and art of education.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

The Chairman read the following telegram:—

“Hawera, 3rd February, 1904.

“G. Hogben, Esq., Inspector-General of Schools, President of Inspectors’ Conference, Wellington.

“PLEASE convey the following message from the Minister of Education to the Conference:—

“I regret very much that I am unable personally to welcome you on this the occasion of the first Conference of Inspectors held during my term of office as Minister of Education. I may assure you that it is only too urgent public business, which admits of no postponement, that my absence from Wellington is due. During your session, however, I hope to have the pleasure of conferring with you on some of the most important matters that will come under your attention and consideration.