

schools the position was different. It might be considered by Professor Haslam and Professor Gilray that Professor Thomas and the speaker were not so much interested as to whether their pupils expressed themselves correctly, but he thought that at a later stage they would be able to show that they took a vital interest in that matter, although they did not consider that the pupils expressed themselves very much better even if during the primary course they had been well trained in grammar.

Mr. J. H. HARKNESS was very sorry to hear the opinion expressed by Mr. Petrie that the school hours should be lengthened, and he was pleased to hear an expression of feeling against such lengthening of the school hours. He thought he was voicing the unanimous opinion of the primary-school teachers of New Zealand when he said they would be opposed to it. He did not think the suggested lengthening of the school hours should be allowed to go forth without a protest being made against it. The teachers' school hours were not limited to five. Any teacher worthy of the name spent more time on his work than that. Experience had taught him that five hours was the limit of the time during which a teacher could profitably engage the attention of the children. He noticed, late in the day, a loss of energy, strength, and clearness of mental vision on the part of the children compared with what they possessed earlier in the day. It had been said that the number of subjects had been increased, and therefore the school hours must be lengthened. He thought they could well keep the hours the same, and if necessary cut out some of the subjects. The opinion was growing that some subjects, such as woodwork, ironwork, cookery, and dress-making, should be deferred until the child had completed the primary course.

Mr. STRACHAN said there seemed to be only one subject on which all were unanimous—he had not heard any one that morning ask for more time for arithmetic, but some members of the Conference had urged that less time should be given to this subject. It had also been urged that more time should be given to English. If the Conference had been called for one matter more than another, it was due to the allegation that the syllabus was overcrowded. It was manifest that at the primary stage they could not do everything. It was important that teachers, especially of very small schools, should have a fairly definite programme before them. In his reading he had come across nothing that seemed to be so important in America of late years as the working of some committees on education. A committee of fifteen went into the subjects suitable for a primary-school course, and the question of how many hours should be devoted to each subject. Another dealt with the programme of the secondary schools. He proposed that a committee of eight—one from each section of the Conference—be appointed to go into the question of the subjects suitable for the primary-school system, and the length of time to be devoted to each; and that the following gentlemen constitute the committee: Professor Thomas, Professor White, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Bevan-Brown, Mr. George, Mr. J. H. Harkness, Mr. Petrie, and the Inspector-General; the committee to be given twelve months to report, and be instructed to obtain information from all countries in the world advanced in educational matters. It was a very important matter that the teachers should know definitely what subjects they should have to teach, and how much time should be given to each subject. He considered that the time would be well spent.

Mr. G. A. HARKNESS seconded the motion.

It was agreed to postpone the consideration of the motion in order to allow the discussion on the general question to proceed.

Mr. DE BERRY said that one or two matters had been raised during the discussion that called for a few words from the primary-school teachers. Mr. J. H. Harkness had entered an emphatic protest against lengthening the school day. There was another aspect, and that was that they as educationalists were seeking to benefit not the syllabus or any class of teachers, but they were seeking the benefit and ultimate good of the child. Their action that morning showed that the majority of the Conference was opposed to long hours of mental work, and it must necessarily follow that children, who were much weaker than they were, required shorter hours of mental training. There were one or two points that had been lost sight of, particularly by the two professors who had spoken. One point was that the child should not be expected to go from the primary school to the University, but should go to the University from the intermediate stage of a secondary school. That was one of the weaknesses of our system. Some of them were endeavouring to make the child too precocious—they were trying to force children on from the primary school to the University. If the course of instruction were taken in a logical manner, and if the secondary schools had imposed upon them a syllabus on the same lines as the syllabus imposed on the primary schools, the University professor would not then have any cause to complain about the lack of knowledge of formal grammar. The primary schools were doing all that was required of them in the matter of formal grammar—they were doing what was required of them by the syllabus. But there was a very bad break. The child left the primary school and went to the district high school or to some other secondary school, and there the system of teaching, particularly in English, did not follow logically and naturally upon the work that the pupil had done in the primary school. Were the district high schools and secondary schools of all classes to follow on with their work on the same principle and spirit as the primary-school teachers had to work on, then the formal-grammar stage would naturally come at that period of a child's development represented by the secondary school, and the child on reaching a sufficient standard in the secondary school would be quite fit to go on to the University. The child from the primary school had a mind that at that stage was not at all fitted to comprehend abstract matters of formal grammar such as was required of any student going on to the University. They had been told that there was not enough attention paid to English in the syllabus—to fostering the appreciation of English literature. That was a point that could not be dealt with entirely in the primary schools. The point must not be lost sight of that they had very young children in the primary schools, and it was impossible to train a child, say at the age of thirteen, to that standard of appreciation of English literature that was demanded by a university professor. In the discussion on grammar