

he hoped it would commend itself to the wisdom of the Conference. He moved, That in the opinion of this Conference the syllabus of work for primary schools is based on sound principles, and is generally well adapted to the needs of our pupils. The primary-school teachers, after four years' experience of the syllabus, were almost one in the opinion that the syllabus had brought the teaching into closer touch with the child's life, and that it aimed at the development of the child's mind. It had been said that the syllabus was too broad—that it aimed at too much. He thought the syllabus was made broad intentionally. All of the many separate subjects were parts of one integral whole, representing the expanding environment of the child's life. In training the child they must remember the whole development of the child's mind, and not specialize early in a few subjects. The wording of his resolution was such that it did not commit the Conference to the opinion that the syllabus was by any means perfect—that it was just what they would like. Certain things must be taught in arithmetic; and they felt the pinch there. That led him to suggest that it was not the syllabus alone that was guiding the education of our schools. Very largely it was the work of the Inspectors, and the examinations more or less set by those Inspectors. If they had the syllabus alone to go by, and if they had no special examinations to meet, as teachers they would have a much broader scope and a freer hand in regard to the selection of the work. So long as teachers were human the standard set by the examinations would have more to do with the governing of our schools than the syllabus. In some respects there should be a readjustment of the work of the different standards in arithmetic. What was wanted, they were told, was greater accuracy and speed. The ordinary man was not highly qualified in the manifold rules of arithmetic, but he had quickness in working simple operations; and it would be a good thing if they could emphasize that practical aspect of arithmetic, and if they relegated some of the other aspects to the secondary schools or left them out entirely. If that were done, they could give more time to English, as had been suggested by Professor Gilray. It was not only that the teaching of arithmetic was less useful than it might be—he thought some of the time spent on it would be more economically used if it were set free for other subjects. He could not at all agree with one view that had been expressed with regard to geography. The syllabus four years ago very naturally emphasized the importance of geography; but, largely owing to the unsuitability of the text-books, the humanistic side of geography had been largely neglected. The Teachers' Institute had adopted—he believed without dissent—and forwarded to the Department a remit to the effect that the two courses of geography—which were essentially two parts of one thing—should not be separated, and that some limit should be set to the amount of time given to that subject. It was suggested that if less time were given to arithmetic and geography more time would be available for other subjects. Such subjects as history were outlined very prominently in the syllabus, and yet they were relatively neglected in our schools, and were unsatisfactorily taken. If the Department brought out more suitable reading-books for geography and history the difficulty would be very much minimized. The teachers felt that certain aspects of geography were being emphasized, while others equally important were being neglected. He failed to see why humanistic geography should not be treated on such sound educational lines as suggested for the A course in the present syllabus. With regard to the vexed question of English, Professor Gilray in advocating the inculcation of a love of literature, had put forward a suggestion that they could all endorse. In regard to oral work, it had been shown that if the oral side were neglected, that neglect would follow the children through their lives. The syllabus deserved all honour for having faced the difficulty of language by introducing in the natural way the subject of oral composition in the earliest stages of school-work. With regard to the love of literature, he thought Mr. Holmes was right in pointing out that they must not attribute to the present syllabus any blame in that respect, or in regard to any weakness that might have been noticed in some students who went on to the University course. It was only four years since the present syllabus was introduced, and it would take much longer for the teaching to become effective. He thought Professor Gilray would be pleased to hear that it was the general opinion of the teachers of the primary schools that much more was now being done in our schools to make language a real and lovable thing. They were now trying to develop the habit of reading; but that habit would only be acquired gradually. The use of school libraries was extending very much, and supplementary reading-books were coming into our schools in greater numbers. He hoped the teaching of history would get a fillip from the introduction of a concentric series of suitable reading-books. With the exception of these three subjects, teachers generally found that the present syllabus was satisfactory. The troubles that had arisen in many parts of the Dominion were not chargeable to the syllabus alone. The Teachers' Institute had expressed the opinion that before there could be a proper interpretation of the syllabus the Inspectors must be, as far as the syllabus was concerned, officers of the Department.

Mr. HUGHES seconded the motion.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. BEVAN-BROWN said he was very pleased with the discussion that had taken place, and he was much struck with the speech of Mr. Hughes. With regard to his reference to moral instruction, it was, he thought, a terrible pity that the great book of literature, and, as Huxley said, the primer of morals, was for various reasons unfortunately excluded from the purview of the education of the youth of this country. It was an awful pity that the boys and girls should have the disability—and he was certain it was a disability—of growing up in country places, not perhaps in the towns, without those humanizing influences which came from the reading of the noble language of the Bible. It was of infinitely great importance—to his mind the most important point in education. He did not suppose he could carry with him many of those who were present, but he could not help expressing his conviction that it was of far more importance than formal grammar or the teaching of arithmetic. He was very glad to hear what Inspector Petrie said about the ambitious character of the history and geography in the syllabus, because it confirmed a sort of feeling that he had: he felt inclined to speak with all deference of the primary-school