

The CHAIRMAN said he thought that pupil-teachers were referred to.

Mr. WATKINS thought he was right in saying that within the last few years most of the pupil-teachers had gone through a period at the secondary schools. One of his bitterest recollections was being compelled to read Milton at an age when he was too young to care for it. He thought there might be a danger if they endeavoured to do too much in that respect. He wondered whether a child of ten years of age gained very much by being set to read such works. He thought such work should be given them at a later age. Many schools now had libraries, and those libraries were being used by the pupils. He was glad to hear Mr. Bevan-Brown's explanation as to formal grammar. It was a stumbling-block to many persons to know what was meant by "formal grammar." The syllabus said that grammar was a means to an end: they must not confuse the means with the end. Functional grammar was to be taught so far as it bore upon composition. The syllabus left the teacher power to use such terms as he found to be useful in dealing with a subject. The syllabus, if liberally interpreted by Inspectors, would do a very great deal to prepare pupils for the secondary school. The question was whether the children at the primary schools who were preparing for scholarships or who were going on to secondary schools should not have some special tuition in view of that; if not, the secondary schools must recognize the position, and provide for it when the children first enter the secondary schools. Primary schools did not exist in the first place to prepare children for the secondary schools. Primary education must stand by itself as a means towards securing such an education as was necessary for that portion of the community who would not take up professional work.

Mr. MILNES said he thought Mr. Watkins had hit the nail on the head. The secondary-school teacher evidently wanted formal grammar taught. The primary-school teacher did not want it taught. Was there any reason why the secondary-school teachers should not teach the children formal grammar? He could not see why the first fortnight at the secondary schools should not be devoted to teaching formal grammar, and thus get over the difficulty.

Miss McLEAN did not think it should be allowed to go forth without a protest that primary education should be legislated for or dealt with as if it were a thing by itself. There was no getting away from the fact that a large percentage of the boys went on to secondary schools, and the foundation of their education could not be laid twice over. Therefore secondary-school work must be taken into account in the drawing-up of the primary-school syllabus. It had been said that 60 per cent. of the children at the primary schools did not pass on to the secondary schools—that the primary-school course was their whole education. Surely if 40 per cent. of the primary-school pupils went on to the secondary schools, a foundation ought to be laid so that they could go on to their secondary course satisfactorily. The syllabus of the primary schools was not at fault in this matter so much as the interpretation and the administration of it. Secondary-school teachers found it distinctly a hardship that perhaps half a term had to be spent in preparing pupils for beginning their Latin. It handicapped them very much that the pupils did not know the terms. It was not the fault of the syllabus so much as it was the fault of the interpretation, and teachers were often afraid of going too far. It was that reaction they had heard about. Besides the want of formal grammar, there was also the want of knowledge of Scripture that had been referred to. Our education should not ignore character-building. How could you get the highest form of character-building if you could not refer to the highest authority? There, again, the reaction had gone too far. Bible-reading was not permitted in schools, and therefore teachers had been too afraid to refer to what should be the ideals of all character. There was an ignorance of the principal Scriptural names and characters. It would be an improvement if the age of those pupils coming to secondary schools were lowered. In her opinion, twelve years was a satisfactory age at which to begin secondary-school work or to take up secondary-school subjects.

The CHAIRMAN said he did not want to discuss this question unless he vacated the chair; but he would like to point out with regard to the teaching of grammar that there had evidently been a misunderstanding of the syllabus if there was an idea present in the minds of teachers that no grammatical terms were to be introduced. The wording of the syllabus was that technical grammatical terms should be used very sparingly. What was not encouraged particularly in the syllabus was such a thing as consecutive parsing exercises. With all due deference to Mr. Goyen, the consecutive parsing exercise was formal grammar. Mr. Goyen apparently did not know what was meant by "formal grammar." It was true that to a certain extent there had been a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the syllabus in regard to this subject.

Mr. STRACHAN thought the time had come for him to move the motion of which he had given notice earlier in the day. Such a committee, in his opinion, was necessary. Members of the Conference would notice that it was composed of one representative from each branch of the education system; consequently every side of education ought to have its rights duly put forward. There was another point to be considered: There were 147,000 children in the primary schools, and only about 8,000 in the secondary schools. The 147,000 children must under the present circumstances be considered to a certain extent apart from the seven or eight thousand children who were going on to the secondary schools. Their problems were different problems from those of the seven or eight thousand children who were going on to the secondary schools, and still further apart from those of the thousand children or so who were going on to the University. It was important that a committee should be set up to determine what subjects it was desirable to take in our primary-education system, and teachers ought to know what time was considered a proper allotment for each subject. There ought to be something authoritative as to the time that should be given to arithmetic and other subjects. He might add that if the chairman wished to shorten the term of the primary school, it could be reduced by six months by the adoption of the metric system in arithmetic.

The CHAIRMAN asked where the committee was to meet, and to whom was it to report? If the motion was carried, he presumed the Department would see that effect was given to it. He thought,