

State provided, whether industrial, agricultural, or mechanical. He thought there ought to be a certificate which would guarantee that a boy or girl holding it was fit for the public service, and was also fit for ordinary commercial employment, apart altogether from the proficiency certificate.

Mr. GOYEN thought they had made the winning of the proficiency certificate altogether too easy. He was quite sure that the percentage required for a pass was in some subjects too low. It was too low in arithmetic and composition. The cards used in the examination in these subjects were drawn by the Department, and most of the arithmetic cards were well drawn; but there was, he thought, room for improvement in the composition cards, which, in his opinion, did not suggest right lines of study. It was easy for a boy or a girl to make 40 per cent. in these subjects and still be utterly unfit for the work of the secondary school. He thought they might raise the percentage a good deal, and thus make the certificate a warrant of thoroughness of preparation in the work prescribed for the primary school. Many of those who got proficiency certificates simply "scraped" through. Moreover, some of them were rather young, and would be all the better for another year in the primary school.

Mr. J. H. HARKNESS said the multiplication of examinations led teachers to do special "coaching" out of school hours for these scholarships. In regard to what had been said by one speaker as to the work of the headmasters of district high schools, in his opinion there was a greater amount of worry in the work of the headmaster of a district high school than there was in the management of a primary school.

Mr. FIRTH said that, whilst supporting Mr. Bevan-Brown's contention that many boys who qualified for a proficiency certificate were not capable of returning adequate value to the State, nor, on the other hand, of gaining much good for themselves in secondary-school work, he would like also to say to Mr. Harkness that he was not right in stating that Mr. Bevan-Brown was mistaken in his judgment because a number of boys had been specially "coached" for the Junior National Scholarship Examination, because, although that special "coaching" would affect their position in the scholarship list, it had no effect at all on the ability of the boy to take up entirely new work—it had no effect at all on the ability of the boy to go on with the secondary-school work. He supported Mr. Bevan-Brown's contention in that respect.

Mr. FLEMING said the criticism of the syllabus that had been made that morning would be very interesting to most Inspectors. Whilst certain faults had been found, still the syllabus as a whole seemed to have found favour generally. There were certain things which, apart from the point of view of the secondary teachers, required remedying. The question was, how they were to remedy these defects and fit in the work of the primary schools with that of the secondary institutions. His opinion all along on this question had been that the body which could help them in this matter was the University Senate, and he thought they had now taken a step in that direction. A number of scholarship pupils had gone into secondary schools, and there was, no doubt, a feeling amongst the parents and teachers that the pupils must reach a certain stage within a certain time, which was in most cases too short for a satisfactory training. That was one of the great defects, to his mind, of our system. He did not know whether the Senate had laid it down expressly, but he thought that underlying the change recently made was the idea to make the secondary course a four-years course. That was a step which he thought was going to be of some service. It was not the quickness in getting through the work, but it was the length of time that was given to the children to do the work thoroughly, which would enable them to derive the greatest benefit from their studies. He thought the Senate would have made another step forward if they had raised the age for matriculation to seventeen years. That would mean that scholarship boys going from the primary schools to secondary schools would be under the age of fourteen. The Chairman had stated that from 35 to 40 per cent. of the children attending primary schools went on to the secondary course. The numbers had roughly been estimated at 40 per cent. There was another thing in regard to which he thought secondary-school teachers might have given the Conference some little information—viz., how many pupils of that 40 per cent. stayed at the secondary schools long enough to derive any benefit from the instruction. Not many. He thought, roughly, from 5 to 10 per cent. only derived any benefit from Latin or mathematics. In his opinion, the best plan would be to take up one of the suggestions which the Chairman had made—viz., that the admission of these children to secondary schools—namely, those who would eventually proceed to the University—by means of a free place should be on "examination" (Department's examination), and not on "proficiency." He would not stop any district scholars going into district high schools or technical schools. Entrance to these schools should be by promotion only. It would be a very difficult thing to carry out. The best guarantee was that the scholars were going to take up a course of study which they would derive benefit from. If they did not take a four-years course they should go into a district high school or a technical school. He had as much abhorrence of examinations as some other speakers had, but he could not see how they could avoid them at present. Certificates of proficiency might be left alone at present, and certificates might then be taken for admission to district high schools and technical schools, or entrance made by promotion only. That would get rid of some of the difficulties, but it seemed to him that it would not make the system anything like perfect.

Mr. HOWELL thought that at least one-third of those who entered secondary schools of which he had had experience were not profiting to any considerable extent by the instruction which they were receiving. It seemed to be a very common feeling amongst them that they were there to put in time, and, perhaps, to obtain the kudos of having belonged to a secondary school. A good many of this class of pupils left in the first year, and the great bulk in the second year. Teaching such pupils was very unsatisfactory, especially as the classes were usually very large. He did not think it was necessary to increase greatly the total amount that was at present expended on secondary education, but if the same total grants were made for a smaller number of pupils it would enable the secondary schools to decrease the size of their classes without diminishing their staffs or reducing their salaries. So far as his experience had gone, the crying evil in secondary-school work