

had been the very large classes. He thought the capitation that was given for secondary schools was altogether inadequate. In the case of technical education no distinction was made between day-classes and evening-classes as regards the age of admission, and he thought a distinction ought to be drawn. The regulation was that those who qualified for free places and who were over the age of thirteen years were entitled to free education. He thought as regards evening-classes that age was too low, and that as regards day-classes it was too high. The education that was provided in technical day-schools was not of a purely technical character. It had vocational aims, certainly; but he was sure that those concerned in its administration were only too anxious that it should be broadly educational. If that was so, in his opinion it was an undoubted hardship to prevent pupils from entering a day technical school under the age of thirteen years. They could enter a secondary school, but they could not enter a day technical school. On the other hand, pupils might claim to be enrolled as day pupils even if they were seventeen or eighteen years of age, and they did so; and, further, they were entitled to claim certain railway concessions up to nineteen. In his opinion, a boy who had done eight or nine hours' work was quite unable to profit by evening instruction. The governing body of the institution with which he was connected had discouraged such young people from taking up full courses at evening classes by refusing to admit them to these as free pupils under the age of fifteen. He would be very glad indeed if the Department could see its way to adopt the suggestion which had been made that there should be no lower age-limit for admission to day technical schools. In the case of the older students he thought it was desirable that they should give some pledge of their earnestness in the way of a deposit. In his own institution those who wished to take advantage of the privilege of free places, and who were over the age of seventeen years, were required to pay a deposit of £1, which was returned to them in full at the end of the year if their attendance had been satisfactory.

Mr. VERNON wished to enter his protest against some of the statements that had been made. He was rather surprised that many speakers should have advocated closing our secondary schools to a large number of the children of New Zealand. He thought that free places in technical schools might be granted to holders of competency certificates. He thought they ought to encourage them as much as possible to enter these schools. If they were not able to get proficiency certificates, and yet could get competency certificates, they might be encouraged to attend technical classes. He did not like to see boys and girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age attending these classes. He thought it would be far better if they attended a school where there was the ordinary school discipline. They all knew that it was not merely the instruction that was imparted, but it was also the discipline they received that benefited them.

Mr. GEORGE thought that the discussion that afternoon must have led the members of the Conference to one or two definite conclusions with reference to the relation between primary and secondary and technical education; and it seemed to him that one of the most definite conclusions they must have come to was the necessity of having one authority for all those branches of education in order to prevent overlapping.

The CHAIRMAN.—Do you mean one local authority?

Mr. GEORGE.—Yes. At the present time it often happened that those three branches of education were under three separate authorities. With reference to the admission of pupils to the technical schools without any special certificate, he presumed that the speaker who made that suggestion referred to those who had gone through the full primary course. He thought the time had come when they should consider the question of raising the age below which children should not be allowed to give up education entirely. At present the age was fourteen years. They ought to keep boys and girls at school as long as possible. He knew that there was a great objection in a British community to make anything compulsory. They might retain the primary education as at present, and a provision might be made by which young people on leaving the primary schools would be required for a certain period longer to devote a certain number of hours per week in continuation of their education. He thought that means could be devised to prevent overlapping, and to overcome the difficulties which under the present system must arise in the smaller centres.

Mr. HILL confessed that, listening to the interesting speeches which had been delivered that afternoon, he was somewhat surprised to hear the suggestion made that the proficiency certificate should not count for admission to the ordinary high school or to the district high school. He had watched with very great interest the working of our education system since the proficiency certificate came into operation, and he had noticed the growing interest which the people themselves had taken in the granting of those certificates. They had to consider that the proficiency certificate represented the final reward to the boy and the girl who completed the standard course in the public schools of the Dominion, and it did seem to him a strange thing that that certificate after years of toil should be deemed to represent an insufficient qualification to enter a high school—not because the preparation was bad, but simply because it did not represent the type of work that was regarded as necessary in a high school. The question was this: whether the work or the kind of work that boys and girls had to do in the primary school should be such as to prepare them to fulfil their life's duties. They had to recollect that three out of every five boys and girls who completed the primary standard course did not attend high schools. About ten thousand children were in Standard Six, according to the Minister's annual return, and six thousand of those children never went on to a secondary school or a district high school, and yet the majority of them might have obtained proficiency certificates. To say that that proficiency certificate ought not to qualify them for admission to a high school seemed to him very strange. Personally, he believed they would get far better results if on the completion of the Sixth Standard course pupils were allowed to continue to work in their own schools along the same lines as the district high schools, and that at the end of a year special examinations were held for their admission to a technical or a secondary school. He was of opinion that the technical schools and the secondary schools were the two kinds of schools they required to make their system of education complete. He was one who believed in the system that had been adopted. He liked the primary-school course