

that had been laid down, and with a few slight modifications he believed it could be adapted to furnish the very best material for secondary and technical schools. He thought that all that was required was more elasticity in the requirements of the Sixth Standard course. If the Inspectors were centralized he assumed that they would examine the pupils and would certify, as they did now, as to the qualifications of candidates for the certificates of admission, whether to a free place in a high school or to a technical school. That opened up a very important question, and he hoped it would be discussed at the Inspectors' Conference. He hoped that the proficiency certificate would be duly recognized as a certificate which would admit children to the high schools, otherwise hundreds of those who now have the right to attend high schools would receive no benefit whatever from our secondary system of education.

Mr. COUSINS desired to point out another aspect of the question. In the Auckland Provincial District, at any rate, many pupils who were qualified to take the course provided at our secondary schools were debarred owing to the necessary expense which would be involved in having to reside away from home near a high school. He thought it might be well to withdraw the money that was at present granted to holders of scholarships living in the large centres, and devote the funds to bringing country children who won scholarships to the towns.

Mr. MARSHALL said that he was somewhat surprised to hear some speakers practically recommending the abolition of the proficiency certificate, and also to hear them ask for some higher qualification. More especially was he astounded when he heard some of the reasons given for such a change. Some of the speakers emphasized the point that the classes were too large in the secondary schools—that these schools could not do efficient work, and therefore the children were handicapped. That was practically what it amounted to. He maintained that if New Zealand had a name for education amongst education authorities in other lands, and if they asked those authorities, it would be found in nine cases out of ten the admiration was not for our primary or university system, but for the splendid opportunities offered for secondary education. In dealing with the claim for secondary rather than technical education, he said he had been frequently consulted by parents as to whether they should send their children to a secondary school or allow them to continue at the district high school. His reply had always been, "How long are you going to allow your boy or girl to continue at school?" If the answer was that it was intended to keep the pupil two or three years longer at school, then he recommended the high school or district high school. But he thought that some provision should be made whereby children should not be admitted to a secondary school unless the parents gave a guarantee that such pupils would be continued at that school for at least two years, or, if he had his way, for three years. He was surprised to hear it said by some speakers that the standard for admission to secondary schools should be raised. He thought that if we gave these young people qualifying under present conditions free education at secondary schools, a large percentage of them were thoroughly competent to take advantage of it.

The Conference adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

FRIDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 1910.

The Conference resumed at 10 a.m.

Mr. MARSHALL said that at the adjournment on the previous day he was dealing with the question of whether or not a proficiency certificate was a sufficient guarantee for a pupil to go forward to a secondary school. He now moved, That this Conference, while strongly urging the retention of a proficiency examination as one of the means of enabling pupils to qualify for free places in secondary schools, considers that before the pupil is allowed to enter on a free place in a secondary school the parent or guardian should be compelled to give an undertaking that such pupil will remain a fixed stated minimum period at the secondary school. His object was to express approval of the proficiency examination as one of the means of qualifying for secondary education. Although the remark had been made that some pupils did not appear to benefit by secondary education, the members of the Conference ought not to accept such appearances so far as the examinations were concerned. It was quite possible for pupils who had been several years at a secondary school to have reaped benefits which did not appear on the surface. He knew of instances where pupils who while at the secondary school had caused a considerable amount of vexation, yet were afterwards found taking prominent positions in the Dominion—that was to say, boys who had not given any indication of scholastic ability had as men attained to high and important positions. On the other hand, pupils who continue three or four years at a secondary school invariably give some indication that they have received benefit from that course. The young people upon whom the secondary school makes no permanent impression are those that remain only a short time at such school. There was another aspect of the question: It was a serious thing to begin limiting the opportunities for higher education to the great bulk of the people. During the last few months it had been decided to raise the standard of the Matriculation Examination, and the effect of thus raising the standard would prolong the time at school by at least one year. That meant that a certain number of pupils would be cut off. If now the proficiency examination were interfered with, the opportunities of those who were desirous of taking advantage of a secondary course would be still further restricted. It seemed to him, looking over the figures of the various schools, that half of the district high schools in outlying districts would not be able to carry on. They depended on the capitation per pupil, and he had come to the opinion just expressed after studying the information given in the last annual education report. If the resolution which had been moved had not been so long he would have liked to add a tag to it somewhat in this form: "That in the case of those forms or classes no capitation shall be paid on any class which exceeds twenty-five pupils taught by one teacher at the same time." To refer again to the subject of proficiency