

take them under thirteen. The headmaster of Clifton said he did not want any boy under thirteen, even if he was a genius, and he informed him (Mr. Hogben) that that was the opinion of many headmasters. That represented one stage—from twelve to fourteen: thirteen to fourteen he put it down at. At about sixteen years of age there was a distinct natural sifting of boys and girls. There were some for whom it was not beneficial that they should give their whole time to school-work. They ought to be out earning their living, but going on with their education as well. In the case of some, it was not worth their while devoting the whole of their time to education: they might carry on their education side by side with their professional work. So that in the secondary-school period they had three kinds of people. He believed they ought all to go on with their education for a certain period. He believed it would not be a bad thing—whether by local option or by a general law, as in Germany—that they should make it compulsory. That was his personal opinion—not his official opinion—that they might make it compulsory for all to go on for three years longer than they did now. If we wanted our system to grow up logically, we ought to logically provide for the division of the children according to their natural capacity. They would come to this question again when considering the work of the technical schools. The question now was, where the children should go for the first part of the period, and perhaps for the second. They should bear in mind—certainly in the larger towns—that there should be provision for all these different kinds of pupils. That was what they were aiming at under the present system, so that this motion did not mean any amendment to what was being done now. They had decided on the door: now they would have to decide what they would do when they were entering the door.

Mr. GEORGE would like to know whether Mr. Gray would make it compulsory that the children should go to any particular type of school, or would he give the parent an option in the selection of the school.

Mr. GRAY said they ought to keep in touch as far as possible with every parent, and, working in conjunction with them, get the children placed in the best institution.

Mr. HOWELL said he felt that, while the system proposed was an ideal one, there would be serious difficulties in carrying it out at present. In the case of large primary schools it would be impossible for the master to have such an intimate knowledge of the capacity of every boy and girl as would enable him to say definitely for what class of secondary work each was best adapted.

Mr. GOREN agreed with the last speaker that it would be beyond the powers of most of our teachers to determine the aptitude of the pupil on leaving school at thirteen or fourteen. That seemed to be the weakness of Mr. Gray's proposal. He thought the parent's opinion should prevail on that point, and not the teacher's opinion. The teacher was not in anything like as good a position as the parent to determine what the child should be allowed to proceed with. He would vote against the motion on those grounds.

Mr. HUGHES quite agreed that the door should be as wide as practicable; but there should also, if possible, be some guarantee that the child going on to take purely secondary education, in the narrowest sense, should take that course for a definite time. A pronouncement of the Conference would have some weight if they said that, in the case of a child taking high-school work pure and simple, the parent of the child should be prepared to state that the child would give at least two years to that work. He thought there should be a selection. Mr. Gray's motion was ideal, but the machinery was inadequate, and he thought it would fail. The ambitions of parents had to be considered. He (Mr. Hughes) was sometimes consulted by parents, and he had the greatest difficulty in advising them in regard to the aptitudes of their children. He proposed to move an amendment to the effect that the time specified should be not less than two years.

The CHAIRMAN said that members of the Conference would find on page 39, E.-1, a statement as to the length of time spent by pupils at secondary schools. The average time spent at a secondary school in New Zealand was over two years and a half. Three or four years ago it was 2.1, now it was 2.9 years. If they made some form of education compulsory after the children left the primary school the tendency would be to increase the time spent at the secondary school still further. It would in that case be some sound and sufficient reason that would induce parents to take their children away from the secondary schools. If that was so, were they in such cases going to exact the carrying-out of a bond with a penalty?

Mr. HILL thought that if the resolution were carried out, it would eventually be detrimental to secondary schools. They had to recollect that a large number of parents made great sacrifices in order that their children might receive as much secondary education as possible. That aspect of the question should be considered by the members of the Conference. He agreed that there should be a leaving-qualification, and that they should abolish the wretched competency certificate, which represented the standard of mediocrity. He thought the right to send a boy or girl with a proficiency certificate to a secondary school should be left in the hands of the parent, and that he or she should continue at the secondary school as long as the parents were willing to make the necessary sacrifice. Depend upon it, if the parents were fairly well off their children would attend the secondary school sufficiently long to obtain something beneficial for their future life's work.

Mr. RITCHIE said he was very strongly in sympathy with Mr. Gray in his desire to open as widely as possible the doors of the secondary and technical schools. The sifting process which Mr. Gray referred to with regard to determining the fitness of the primary-school pupils to go to these institutions he thought might be extended over even a longer period than the three years proposed. Children developed very rapidly in the last years of their school life, and often a long probationary period was scarcely necessary. He felt some doubts as to the proposal to ask parents for some guarantee. A good many parents were casual sort of people in regard to determining what the final occupations of their children would be. That matter was determined largely after the pupil had been a year or two in the higher institution. The pupil then began to show more decidedly what was in him. There were opportunities already for keeping the parents in touch with what the child was doing at school. There were the reports which were sent out at the end of every