

term, and those reports might be useful in guiding the parents as to the duration of the pupils' stay at the secondary school. He would like to see also more encouragement, if possible, given to the parent who was not anxious to shirk the responsibility of defraying some of the cost of the child's education. It was often those who were not well-off who were willing to make sacrifices and encourage their children to look upon their opportunities with some sense of responsibility.

Mr. LA TROBE said he would support the first part of the resolution. He thought the saving of our present examination system was that it did not do the work in was intended to do; because, if it did, our education system would be so utterly at variance with the industrial demands of the country that it could not stand.

Mr. GRAY pointed out that the resolution he had moved did not require a guarantee—only that the parents should indicate the time.

The Conference divided.—Ayes, 23; Noes, 18: majority for, 5.

Mr. GRAY moved, That the education of every child should be continued at least up to the age of seventeen years.

Mr. HILL seconded the motion.

Motion, by leave, temporarily withdrawn.

Professor HASLAM moved, That the pupil be not admitted to the secondary school unless the parent guarantee that the child shall stay at the secondary school for three years, and deposit the sum of £——, which shall be forfeited in case the guarantee is broken. He thought they were all agreed that if parents sent their children to a secondary school they should keep them there for a fair time; otherwise it was a bad investment for the State for the children to have free education for a few years, and then go away. He thought they were all agreed that the children should stay for a certain time—either two years and a half or three years. He thought three years himself. However, the headmasters of the secondary schools were likely to know better than he did about that. He was not so particular about there being a deposit so long as there was a guarantee or bond, which could be executed very simply without legal action.

Mr. BEVAN-BROWN seconded the motion.

Mr. HILL said he objected entirely to the proposal to require any parent to give a guarantee. If that were done it would mean excluding a very large proportion of the children who pass through the primary-school course.

Professor THOMAS agreed with Professor Haslam that those desiring secondary education should stay a sufficient length of time to benefit by it; but what that time was varied.

Mr. VERNON opposed the motion. If they wanted a guarantee in respect of free pupils they should also require one in regard to paying pupils, because the Government was contributing towards the cost of the system.

Mr. MARSHALL moved the omission of all the words after the words "three years."

Professor KIRK said one might just as well ask for a guarantee from a tradesman that a pair of boots shall last for three years.

Professor HASLAM thought that if parents gave a guarantee they would try to keep it, even without a deposit of a sum of money.

Mr. HOWELL said the existence of a guarantee in connection with one educational institution, at any rate, had worked very well.

Mr. HUGHES thought that three years would deter many parents from giving a guarantee, and would thus prevent many deserving children from getting a secondary education. He thought two years would be better.

The amendment was agreed to, and the motion, as amended, was put, and negatived on the voices.

Infant-schools.

Miss CRAIG said that in the course of his remarks on the previous day Mr. George said that the infant-schools of New Zealand were the worst feature of our education system. On speaking to Mr. George privately she understood that he really meant that the school buildings and the staffing of the infant-schools were not satisfactory. It was admitted that the infant-schools—and, in fact, all the schools—were not perhaps all they should be. In order to get the most satisfactory results each class in an infant-school should have a room to itself. In her opinion the classes in the infant-schools should be smaller. The staffing should be more generous. They should have specially qualified teachers—perhaps the best teachers on the staff—to do this work. The foundation work was undoubtedly the most important, and if that foundation suffered it stood to reason that the whole of the primary-school course would suffer. Much had been said on the previous day about the teaching of English. Even that subject could be taught in the infant-schools, and it would very much help the primary-school teachers, and even the secondary-school teachers. Even in her babies' class the little ones were taught simple oral composition by being asked to describe things. Even in that way something was being done to help on the teaching of English. In the First Standard and in the Preparatory class she had told the children such stories as "Enoch Arden" and even "Ivanhoe," and had been surprised at the amount of interest that had been manifested by the children and the grasp they got of the subject. They did not claim that the infant-schools were perfect, but they compared favourably with other standards.

Miss BIRSS rose to support the remarks which Miss Craig had made. The Conference, or a large number of its members, had no idea of what the work of the infant-teacher was, or of the size of the classes. In many of the infant-rooms the teacher had a class of over a hundred, with an average of from eighty to ninety. And to help her in that work she had the services of an untrained pupil-teacher, and also a probationer in some cases for two hours a day. In the course of her work she had often felt that pupil-teachers should have been abolished long ago. The staffing of the infant-rooms was very inadequate, and in addition to that there were the disadvantages of inadequate school buildings. New infant-schools should be built on a proper plan. Some