

Board to make suitable provision of continuation classes for the further instruction of young persons above the age of fourteen years with reference to the crafts and industries practised in the district, or to such crafts and industries as the School Boards may select, and also for their instruction in the English language and literature.' And again, 'It shall be lawful for a School Board from time to time to make by-laws requiring the attendance at continuation classes up to seventeen years (or such other age not exceeding seventeen years as may be specified by the by-laws) of young persons above the age of fourteen not otherwise receiving suitable instruction.' The Act not only makes the establishment of continuation classes compulsory, but also prescribes what shall be the course of instruction, and empowers School Boards to compel attendance. It is obvious that it would be cruel to force children to attend evening-classes after working seven or eight hours at their employment. How can we reconcile compulsory attendance at school with daily employment? By limiting the hours of work for all under seventeen, and compelling employers to grant facilities for attendance at the classes. To the nation this is a question of vital importance, and what is good for the nation is in the end good for the employers. With their sympathy and that of the trade-unions it would be easy to add enormously to the civic and industrial efficiency of the Dominion. It is obvious that the question of extended school life, like the question of protection, is bound up with our industrial system; and, just as we have made sacrifices to foster variety of employment and to make the nation self-contained, so we ought to make sacrifices to lift every class of worker to a higher plane of civic and industrial efficiency. The problem of making provision for an extended education of boys and girls between the end of the compulsory period and the age of seventeen or eighteen is, it must be admitted, a very difficult one, but one that ought to be faced and solved. The following words quoted from a Home paper are of interest in this connection: 'Our modern industrial arrangements too often present alluring prospects for the young for a year or two, but offer absolutely no future. Certain forms of industry are largely parasitic in character, and get more of the physical and mental capital of the young than they are entitled to. They absorb young employees for a year or two, and then cast them aside, and bring in another set in the same way to do the work. It is these parasitic industries that are in large measure responsible for recruiting the ranks of casual labour, and it is in the ranks of casual labour that the great mass of our unemployed are found. If something could be done to divert the young from these occupations it would strike at one, at least, of the many causes of unemployment. Probably no better way of doing so could be found than that provided for in the new measure (Scotland), whereby School Boards are empowered to set up employment bureaux for the purpose of collecting and distributing information as to employment open to children on leaving school, and the conditions of service and the ultimate prospects in each.'"

The CHAIRMAN would like to point out that in Switzerland there was one way of solving the question that was now before the Conference. First of all, in Switzerland there was a general law—federal law—which was binding on every canton. The canton must provide institutions to carry out the federal law. The federal law on this question was a local-option law. It provided that, where a majority of the population entitled to vote—meaning three-fifths—so decided, continuation or vocational education should be compulsory for three years after the conclusion of the primary-school course. More than nineteen-twentieths of the people had adopted that law. Fines might be imposed on the employers of the pupils and on the pupils themselves. In one part of Germany there was a similar law, but it was not a local-option law. It depended on the number of persons employed in a trade. In Germany it had been compulsory since 1907. It was permissive before that. There were three distinct methods—local option, compulsory, and voluntary, as in Halifax. The cases in which the voluntary method had succeeded were few and far-between. In Chicago there was a law compelling the education authority to establish classes if the masters' unions and the workers' unions combined for the purpose.

Mr. GEORGE moved, as an amendment, That before the word "That" the following words be inserted: "That the age of exemption be raised to fifteen years." It seemed to him that one of the first steps forward in educational matters was to raise the age-limit. At the present time a boy might leave the primary school at fourteen years of age unless he obtained an exemption certificate before that age. He thought it was undesirable, from a physique point of view, that a boy should commence work under fifteen years of age. After that age one began to deal with a very difficult problem. It was very nice in theory to say that every boy and girl must stay at school until they were seventeen; but one had to consider the economic conditions, and those who were not so well situated. He thought that if the Conference moved in the direction of his resolution that would be one step forward. There was a great deal to be said in favour of local option. He believed that the Scotch Act had worked exceedingly well. In his opinion, every one would agree that beyond fifteen, and at least up to seventeen—he would like to see it even higher—boys and girls should receive some instruction, although they might be earning their own living. The question then arose as to the nature of the education-work that should be taken up. He was strongly against evening-classes, and would like to see them abolished in the case of those who had been working all day. Boys and girls who had been working all day were physically unfit to attend evening-classes. If his amendment was not carried he would vote for Mr. Gray's motion.

Mr. BRAIK seconded the amendment. The difficulty would be to apply the change to rural districts, owing to the scattered population and the want of roads. The difficulties would be very great. He would support the amendment on this ground: that if they raised the age to fifteen they might reasonably expect boys and girls in country places to attend school till they were fifteen. He thought the Conference should affirm the principle that the compulsory age should be raised to fifteen. He would be very glad if some plan could be hit on under which military work, together with educational work, could be carried out, so that our young people would reach manhood as worthy soldiers and citizens.

Mr. WATKINS hoped that nothing would be done by the Conference to encourage evening-classes in place of day-classes.