

Mr. HOLMES moved, That all junior national and Education Board scholarships be abolished; that sufficient travelling-expenses and boarding-allowances be made to those pupils attending secondary schools from a distance or obliged to reside away from home. This motion naturally followed on the resolution the Conference had already come to. In abolishing the proficiency certificate, and having a leaving-certificate, the Conference had practically decided that we should do away with examinations altogether, except in so far as the conferences between the Inspector and the headmaster were concerned. He thought the Department would also be happy in being released from this examination, because it must be an awful task for the Department to conduct the Junior Scholarship Examinations, considering the number of candidates they had to deal with and the number of papers that had to be got through. His idea in connection with this matter was this: that our policy should be to distribute whatever money was available in such a way as that the greatest good would be given to the greatest number. That was not the case now. The teachers at their institute meeting had also talked this matter over, and they had come to the conclusion that the time had come when scholarships should be abolished. The teachers were certainly of opinion that scholarships should not be continued, because it was simply, as it were, giving monetary value to brains, and they did not think that at that stage of a person's school life they should be putting £10 or £40 a year as the value of certain educational equipment. Scholarships were useful in the olden days when children had not the advantage of free places, and secondary schools were much fewer. £10,413 was expended in scholarships last year. He did not suggest giving full boarding-allowances, because he thought parents should be prepared to supplement the grant made by the Department in keeping the children when they were boarding away from home.

Mr. FLEMING seconded the motion. He might say, as far as the Wellington Education District was concerned, that when the free places were established he said to the Board that he thought the scholarship money should be given for the benefit of the country children. Seeing that the children had free places given to them, he thought that was quite sufficient in the way of scholarships for those who were living near any secondary school. He thoroughly agreed with the principle of the resolution. The details could be worked out afterwards. He thought Mr. Holmes wanted to lay down the general principle that the money should be restricted generally to country children. He heartily supported the teachers on this question.

Mr. STRACHAN thought that before this question was disposed of the Conference should consider the claims of town pupils in regard to the cost of books. A good many people in the towns had children with a fair amount of brains, but the parents had not an overplus of money, and the cost of the books was a considerable item. He thought that, at any rate to the extent of the cost of the books, the claims of the town pupils ought to be considered. He knew of some cases where the cost of the books was a turning-point in deciding whether the children should be allowed to go to the high school or not.

Professor THOMAS said there were two minor points that he thought were worth mentioning. A difficulty sometimes arose in the selection of a boardinghouse for a child who came in from the country with a scholarship. The parents were not always able to choose wisely, and sometimes the children were boarded in most undesirable localities. It might be better if the boarding-allowance were coupled with the condition of an approved household. Then there was the question of some allowance being made to town children to cover the cost of books. In the case of parents who were not well-off, some allowance might be made to assist in the purchase of books, or an allowance in the nature of partial maintenance.

The CHAIRMAN said, in regard to books, the amount required was very small, and an arrangement could be made to give assistance in certain really deserving cases. In the case of the bulk of parents, he did not see why they should not make some sacrifices. He thought the boarding-allowance should be a full allowance, because there were a good many expenses—such as clothes—connected with sending children to secondary schools. He thought they ought to authorize the authorities of secondary schools to make a rule compelling children from the country to board at certain licensed houses—preferably where there were teachers in charge.

Dr. ANDERSON wished to express his entire sympathy with Mr. Holmes's attitude on this question, and also his own personal concurrence with Mr. Hogben's view that as far as possible these things should not be competitive. However, the abolition of the competitive element was necessarily a financial matter. If Parliament was prepared to provide moneys sufficient for all who attained to a certain qualification, the competitive element could be abolished. If not, a certain amount of competition must prevail if there were more applicants than there was money to provide for them. There was another aspect of the question to which he would like to call the attention of the Conference. In regard to free places, what were they to do in the case of pupils from private schools? Mr. Holmes had shown that the carrying of his motion would relieve the Department of the work of examination for Junior National Scholarships, and concurrently with that for junior free places. He could not see how they could apply any principle of selection such as had been suggested to the pupils of private schools, who were as much entitled to higher secondary education as pupils attending the public primary schools.

Mr. PETRIE thought the Conference ought to very seriously consider what some of the motions they were adopting would involve. The present motion involved this: that every child who qualified for admission to a secondary school was going to have a boarding-allowance. That might mean the expenditure of a great deal of money. It might mean expending four or five times the present grant for National and Board Scholarships. He thought that before they were invited to pass a resolution of that kind they ought to have some information as to the financial burden the change would involve.

The CHAIRMAN said it was all worked out in his report three years ago.

Mr. PETRIE said he did not like to vote in the dark on a motion like that now before the Conference. While examinations had many objectionable features, still he thought they did a great