

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

WEDNESDAY, 12TH FEBRUARY, 1913.

The Conference met in the House of Representatives chamber at 10 a.m.

Present: Education Department—Messrs. G. Hogben, M.A., F.G.S. (Chairman of the Conference); W. J. Anderson, M.A., LL.D.; W. E. Spencer, M.A., M.Sc.; W. W. Bird, M.A.; T. H. Gill, M.A., LL.B.; M. H. Browne; J. Porteous, M.A.; E. C. Isaac; Royd Garlick. Auckland Education District—Messrs. E. K. Mulgan, M.A.; C. W. Garrard, B.A.; W. A. Burnside, M.A.; C. H. Plummer, LL.B.; J. T. G. Cox; M. Priestley; N. T. Lambourne, M.A.; J. W. McIlraith, M.A., LL.B., Litt. D.; N. R. McKenzie. Taranaki Education District—Messrs. W. A. Ballantyne, B.A.; R. G. Whetter, M.A. Wanganui Education District—Messrs. C. D. Braik, M.A.; J. Milne, M.A.; T. B. Strong, M.A., B.Sc.; D. Stewart. Wellington Education District—Messrs. T. R. Fleming, M.A., LL.B.; F. H. Bakewell, M.A.; F. G. A. Stuckey, M.A.; A. B. Charters, M.A. Hawke's Bay Education District—Messrs. H. T. Hill, B.A.; J. A. Smith, B.A. Marlborough Education District—Mr. D. A. Strachan, M.A. Nelson Education District—Messrs. G. A. Harkness, M.A.; A. Crawford, B.A. Grey Education District—Mr. W. S. Austin. Westland Education District—Mr. A. J. Morton, B.A. North Canterbury Education District—Messrs. W. Brock, M.A.; C. D. Hardie, B.A.; S. C. Owen, M.A.; J. B. Mayne, B.A. South Canterbury Education District—Messrs. J. G. Gow, M.A.; A. Bell, M.A. Otago Education District—Messrs. C. R. D. Richardson, B.A.; C. R. Bossence; J. R. Don, M.A., D.Sc.; J. Robertson, B.A., B.Sc. Southland Education District—Messrs. J. Hendry, B.A.; A. L. Wylie, M.A. Principals of Training Colleges—Messrs. H. A. E. Milnes, B.Sc.; J. S. Tennant, M.A., B.Sc.; T. S. Foster, M.A.; E. Pinder, M.A.

ADDRESS OF CHAIRMAN (G. HOGBEN, M.A., F.G.S., INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF SCHOOLS).

Changes in the Methods of Education are an Inevitable Consequence of Changes in the Ideals of Human Life.

It is good for us from time to time to reconsider and restate our ideals and our schemes for realizing those ideals. It is inevitable that we should have ideals, whether we are conscious of them or not, and as a matter of practice it is inevitable also that we should have schemes for realizing those ideals, which in like manner may be followed either consciously or unconsciously to ourselves.

Within the last hundred years—nay, within the last fifty years—most thinking men have recast both their ideals of life and their schemes for realizing them. How largely this is the case is clearly pointed out by the great philosopher of Jena, Professor Eucken, more especially in the Nobel Lecture delivered by him at Stockholm in March, 1909, which last year was translated into English by A. G. Widgey, of Cambridge and Edinburgh. The title of the lecture is "Naturalism or Idealism." Possibly some of you have already seen it, but I make no apology for recalling to your minds some of the points on which Eucken dwells with especial emphasis, for it is impossible in an enlightened view to separate education from life; even those who take what I might call the most formal view of education would grant that it was part of the machinery of life. I would venture to go further, and say that it was a part of life, or, indeed, in the widest sense of both terms, life itself. In any case, we cannot form true or really workable ideals of life without considering the kind of things our education and our systems of education ought to be.

Unthinking people may, and actually do, look upon any attempt to change or reform any more or less successful scheme of education as dangerous and as likely to lead to confusion; but when our ideals of life grow and change, there will be contradiction and therefore confusion if we do not reshape our systems of education from time to time in accordance with our new ideals of life. The true reformer, in helping to thrust aside that which has grown old and out of accord with the working ideals of the present, will seek for methods that are inspired by those ideals and are therefore in accord with them; he is not merely destructive; his most important work is constructive.

What, for our purpose, is common to naturalism and idealism? And what, for us, is the difference between them?

I am not concerned here with the arguments urged by Eucken to show that "naturalism" is inadequate to explain life; I shall assume for my own part that the case for "idealism" is proved; but I would point out to you that, as far as the methods of education are concerned, the features that are common to modern naturalism and modern idealism will determine those methods; they are the tendencies of—(a) Modern science; (b) modern industrial activity; (c) modern ideals of social relations.

The feature that belongs to idealism is that these in themselves are not sufficient to explain life; man is not determined by these—that is, by his relation to his environment alone; he is himself, in his essence, above it. He has for his inner law neither the principle of absolute determinism (or external necessity or fate), nor the principle of absolute liberty; but a kind of self-determinism, liberty to realize himself in accordance with his own nature as well as in accordance with his environment, and therefore in accordance with the life of all—with a universal life, which he owns and by which he is owned.