

are now within the Federal University of Wales four constituent colleges, situated at Aberystwith, Cardiff, Bangor, and Swansea. Although the distances separating these centres is not so great as the distance separating New Zealand colleges, the difficulties in the way of ready communication are considerable. Under the new constitution resulting from the recommendations of the Royal Commission, university education of a high standard is now proceeding smoothly and efficiently, and there is no apparent desire to change the federal system. The Commission's report states, in words which surely may be applied to New Zealand also, "In spite of all difficulties and drawbacks due to geographical conditions and defective means of communication, of differences in industrial and social conditions, of the spirit of local patriotism which does not always pull the same way as the larger national sentiment, we are convinced that Wales desires—and is right in desiring—a single national university."*

It is true that there are comparatively few universities organized under the federal system, and that the system has serious drawbacks only to be overcome by tactful and sympathetic government on the part of the University, and willingness to co-operate on the part of the constituent colleges. But we see no reason for doubting that what is possible in Wales may be possible in New Zealand. With an equitable allocation of "Special Schools" among the four chief centres of population so that, while national economy is observed, the legitimate aspirations of each college to a share in providing special courses may be satisfied, we see no reason why the federal system may not work well for many years to come. It is perhaps inevitable, and in fact desirable, that in the fullness of time the constituent colleges may become separate universities; but, in our judgment, the best interests of university education demand that the authority of the Dominion as a whole should for the present at least be behind the teaching and the degrees conferred.

Reformed federal system best for present conditions.

We believe that a most unfortunate decision was made, when the University was constituted in 1874 as a merely examining body, and that that fact alone is responsible for much which we regard as deficient in the teaching and life of the University, and for the extravagant belief which is held by the public in the value of mere degrees as distinct from sound and efficient education. In this connection the London University Commission's report speaks very definitely: "We are convinced that both a detached syllabus and an external examination are inconsistent with the true interests of university education, injurious to the students, degrading to the teachers, and ineffective for the ends they are supposed to promote. The insistence on a system of external examinations is always based upon want of faith in the teachers." With this view we concur fully, and we believe that a fair and impartial inquiry into the details of university education in New Zealand—an inquiry which we cannot claim to have made in the time at our disposal—would substantiate it fully. We base our opinion mainly upon the evidence which is printed in the appendix to this report.

Faults ascribed to wrong basis of university organization.

The effect upon the teaching staff during the fifty years of the external examination regime is, unhappily, not easily remedied. Methods of teaching based upon such a regime and designed to produce "results" rather than develop the spirit of eager inquiry in the pursuit of knowledge, cannot be changed in a day. Nor can the popular estimation of what constitutes a university education be expected to change materially for a long time to come. These considerations have weighed with us in arriving at the opinion that a teaching university which allows all reasonable freedom to the college professors in regard to the curriculum, and gives them a due share in the examination of their students, while providing that each professor of a subject has the advantage of the advice and criticism of his colleagues professing the same subject in the other colleges, is really the best solution of the present problem. The proposal for four separate universities takes no account of the cumulative effect of fifty years spent in the pursuit of false ideals.

Effect of fifty years of examination regime.

We recommend that the University of New Zealand be reorganized as a teaching university with Constituent Colleges. These Constituent Colleges should be granted definite powers in relation to curricula and methods of examination. We propose that the governing body of the University shall be called the Council,

A reformed constitution outlined.

* Royal Commission on the University of Wales Report, sec. 174, p. 57.