

Register, March 22/11

UNIVERSITY COMMISSION.

PROFESSOR CHAPMAN EXAMINED.

The University Education Commission held a meeting on Tuesday at Parliament House. Present—Mr. Ryan, M.P. (Chairman), the Hon. A. W. Styles, M.L.C., the Hon. A. H. Peake, and Mr. Green, M.P.'s.

Professor Chapman, of the Adelaide University, said the University Council had not considered the matter on which he was about to speak, and the views he expressed would be his own. At the last sitting he had favoured the Government taking over the technical schools in the country. A consistent scheme of technical education were to be evolved the central school could no longer remain isolated. Since the establishment of high schools there was not the same need that existed previously for the preparatory school. It should either be come a separate high school or be merged in the ordinary school. Far the larger proportion of the students of the School of Mines were those attending with no intention of taking the professional courses, and whose studies came under the heading of industries rather than mines. That was its proper field. They had not yet in South Australia approached the proper training of apprentices, who ought to receive part of their training at a properly organized technical school. On that phase of technical education they wanted to concentrate attention. That work should be separated from the other departments, and could best be organized throughout the State by coming under direct Government control. The associate courses of the School of Mines, with fewer students, represented the most costly portion of its work, and should be under the direct control of the University. Only in that way was it possible to build up a first-rate School of Mines. The separation of the mines department from the technical would not lower the status of the school, and would be appreciated by the public. The greatest difficulty under which the country schools had laboured had been that the majority of the students had only been able to study in the evening, and with only the ordinary school training. Yet these had carried some pupils to the standard required for associate work in the Adelaide School of Mines. They did not want each country school to have power to issue its own diplomas in professional courses. Such a diploma should be one worth having, and students for the degree or associate courses should sit at a central examination, the work of which would be mapped out by a competent board, the Chairman of which should advise the country schools on the work needed to prepare candidates. The position of such schools would be that of secondary colleges, and specially good men might be assisted to take their course at the University by a system of scholarships. The greater part of the work in the schools would be ordinary technical classes. His scheme proposed that the educational system should be governed by the University and the Education Department, the former controlling from the top downwards, and the latter from the bottom upwards. The safest plan would be to put technical schools under direct Government control.

—Abolition of School of Mines Council.—
The higher technical work should be controlled from the University. In suggesting in effect that the School of Mines Council should be abolished, he was not ungracious. The country owed a debt to the gentlemen who had composed that council; but the time had come when they should systematize their educational buildings. It was impossible to organize a system with too many centres of control. He had proposed two, and that should be sufficient. He had received letters from old students asking whether the University could not give an engineering degree which could be used after their names instead of the present cumbersome series of degrees, diplomas and qualifications now in existence. Nothing so clearly and concisely ticketed a man as a University degree, and under the letters patent of the Adelaide University its degrees were recognised throughout the British Dominions. The fact that the term School of Mines appeared in the diplomas was an advantage to the mining man, but not to the engineering man. Moreover, the diplomas issued by schools of mines were more local in character.

—Engineering Degree Wanted.—
The Adelaide University did not at present grant engineering degrees, because the University Act made no provision for them. Melbourne and Sydney Universities gave degrees in engineering, and South Australian students who went through courses as hard and as long would like to be placed on an equality in that respect. He had spoken to several students of the School of Mines about his suggestions, and those he had spoken to had been much pleased with

them. One student had said that when in South Australia he had shown the prospectus of the School of Mines to mining men there, and they had put their finger on the dressmaking and some other classes as belittling the institution as a school of mines. The Fellowship students of the School of Mines and those who took the University diploma were the same students. They studied at both institutions and got both qualifications.

—The University Progressive.—

In view of the difficulty under which the Adelaide University had laboured, it really had been a progressive institution. It had offered to train teachers without fees; it had established centres; it had given over the system of years and adopted a system of passing in subjects, which constituted advance, and it had tried by the introduction of commercial and agricultural courses and the alteration of its science courses to help as many as possible.

The Chairman—Was the University progressive through desire or through compulsion? (Hon. A. H. Peake—"It widened with the process of the suns, like everything else.")

Professor Chapman said it had widened from within rather than compulsion, and its forward movements had practically all been initiated by the enthusiasm of the staff and the council. He favoured the Education Department issuing a leaving certificate, which the University could accept from the high schools as equivalent to the matriculation certificate.

By the Hon. A. H. Peake—Under his scheme the Education Department would be relieved of the work that had been the most serious difficulty in the other States. In Adelaide it would mean that they would have a great technical school, which would eventually require the whole of the present School of Mines building. Its principal, working under the control of the Director of Education, would manage the technical work of the whole of the State. That would be of greater advantage than at present, for they had conflict now between the technical schools and the high schools in country towns. It was impossible to avoid friction with separate control. The country towns would soon grow to be big places, and difficulty would arise. The present agreement between the University and the School of Mines was terminable at 12 months' notice. He was aware that the Director to-day was worked almost to breaking point, and believed they wanted a general oversight which should be separated from detail. An Advisory Board such as that proposed by Mr. Frank Tate would only need to meet once or twice a year. If the Government had representation on the University Council, it would put the Government in touch with the institution, and should be a great advantage.

By Mr. Green, M.P.—If the Government established evening continuation schools he took it they would be free schools, as the high schools now were. He doubted the benefit of making technical classes free, except for the training of apprentices; but he would make the charges low, 2/6 or 5/ a term.

—Training of Apprentices.—

The question of the training of apprentices was going to be much more thorough in South Australia. The School of Mines had made a start, but it would be recognised by and by that an apprentice ought to spend a portion of his time at some technical school; but it was the duty of the State to see that he did spend a portion of his time at such a school, and that the employer gave him facilities for so doing. The best way of helping those who could not afford to take extended courses was by a more liberal system of scholarships, both as to terms and numerically. Victoria had a more liberal system than South Australia. The employers would need to be largely educated to the benefits derivable from technical training. At Broken Hill the old-time miner could get along with the problems when it did not matter if a little silver ran to waste; but when it became a question of both zinc and silver extraction the old-time untrained man could not manage the work. The technically trained man at Broken Hill had pushed himself forward by his own merit, and that would become the case in South Australia. Neither the University nor the School of Mines was equipped with a proper engineering laboratory. He would give apprentices the preference in entry to technical schools; but if there was room would take in outsiders. He was aware that in Germany both boys and girls entering the factory or workshop were required to have time at their disposal during the day for technical study. The highly organized system of Germany would never do for a country like this, but they should follow it in degree.

—University Registrar as Witness.—

Mr. C. R. Hodge (Registrar of the Adelaide University), examined by the Hon. A. W. Styles, said he had been in the service 28 years, and had entered his twentieth year as registrar. The accommodation for the administrative staff was cramped, and there should be additional room for the accountant. There ought also to be a larger staff to cope with the growing work of the University, which was also the University for Western Australia. Candidates at the permanent country centres had all the advantages they would have if they came to Adelaide. They now had 34 centres throughout the State. The Minister of Education would be welcome as a member of the University Council. In 1890 they had 289 students; in 1895, 288; in 1900, 761 (including 296 Conservatorium students); in 1905, 1,035 (including Conservatorium 340); and 1910, 943 (including Conservatorium 280). Liberal legislation and reduction of fees had led to the increase of students, who could now take such separate subjects as they could pay for. The establishment of the commercial course had brought in a large number of students. The whole cost of that course for four years was under £16. It would be wise to have a fund to help pay the fees of deserving students. The professional staff had given up its two short vacations to the delivery of extension lectures in the country. In music, examining bodies from abroad took away thousands of pounds yearly which might be kept in the State, for there were no higher diplomas than those of the Adelaide University, which were recognised everywhere.

By the Chairman—He would not object to the Government giving the University a stated income, carrying with it the abolition of fees, if the present entrance standard were maintained.

The commission then adjourned.

—Inspection of High Schools.—

The members of the Education Commission will to-day inspect the Adelaide High School at 10 a.m., and the Norwood High School at 11 a.m.