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EDUCATION: MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

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Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

INTRODUCTION.

THE present notes and recommendations are based upon many years of experience and a recent visit to some of the more important educational centres of England and Scotland.

Although I have visited a large number of institutions I have made no comments upon their work, nor have I included statistical information, but have contented myself by quoting such portions of their proceedings as are likely to be of service to our New Zealand institutions.

In every town visited I found great activity in the cause of technical education, from the simplest elements in the primary schools to the highest stages of university training; and, as an instance of this, while I was in Birmingham a meeting, held with a view to adding a Midlands University to the already splendid educational equipments of the district, realised the sum of £95,244. The London Technical Education Board alone spent last year the sum of £117,744 in this cause, and in every town of a few thousand inhabitants provision is made to improve the rising generation in matters pertaining to every-day life. In the larger cities enormous buildings of excellent design, with every possible convenience and accommodation, have been erected to meet the constantly increasing requirements.

I am forced to one conclusion, and that is, if New Zealand desires to maintain her position among British colonies this question of technical education will need serious attention, and must be placed upon much broader lines than are at present contemplated.

I trust that the suggestions contained herein may serve to promote the cause of this education.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

Technical instruction, as defined by the English Act of 1889, is as follows: "The expression 'technical instruction' shall mean instruction in the principles of science and art applicable to industries, and in the application of special branches of science and art to special industries or employments. It shall not include teaching the practice of any trade, or industry, or employment, but, save as aforesaid, shall include instruction in the branches of science and art with respect to which grants are for the time being made by the Department of Science and Art, and any other form of instruction (including modern languages and commercial and agricultural subjects) which may for the time being be sanctioned by that department by a minute laid before Parliament, and made on the representation of a local authority that such a form of instruction is required by the circumstances of the district. The expression 'manual instruction' shall mean instruction in the use of tools, processes of agriculture, and modelling in clay, wood, or other materials."

Primary Schools.—No part of the funds provided for technical education may be expended in Britain upon children in attendance at a primary school, the funds for such purpose being provided by the Education Department.

In New Zealand we are fortunate in having technical education under the control of the Education Department, which undoubtedly tends to strengthen the position, for upon the development of our primary-school system the success or otherwise of technical work greatly depends. There can be no doubt that one of England's greatest difficulties has arisen from the multiplicity of departments controlling education.

In this sense I am anxious to see the New Zealand educational course made progressive from the primary to the secondary and technical, and from thence to the university without such undue overlapping as has occurred in Britain.

Trade Instruction or Workshop Training.—The English Act distinctly states that "it shall not include teaching the practice of any trade." My inquiries upon this important point have elicited the following reply: "That instruction may be given in the actual practice of any trade so long as that practice deals with principles and methods of work; should the work, however, be continued for the purpose of obtaining manual dexterity it is trenching upon trade practice."

There is practically no difficulty found in the administration of this clause of the Act, wide interpretations being generally accepted by the authorities.