

and English that morning the connecting-link between the primary school and the University had been entirely lost sight of. Allusion had been made to teachers of small schools drawing up schemes of work. That was a real difficulty, and that difficulty would exist so long as they had so large a number of small schools in the Dominion. Mr. Petrie suggested that model syllabuses and schemes of work should be supplied to the teachers. Another suggestion was made that organizing teachers should be employed, whose duty it would be to advise teachers with regard to schemes of work. He thought that a compromise between the two suggestions might admirably meet the point. He held very strongly that the strength of the syllabus rested upon its width. A teacher worthy of the name must have all possible freedom given to him to so arrange his course of work as to meet the local requirements. With regard to the syllabus itself there was one point that must not be lost sight of, and that was that the very width of the syllabus carried along with it that which rendered the syllabus in some respects not all that it should be. What he meant was this: So much was allowed to the individual teacher, and consequently so much was allowed to the Inspector. There were thirteen education districts and thirteen sets of Inspectors, and consequently it followed that there were thirteen different interpretations of the syllabus. That should not be. He held that "Suggestions" similar to those issued to teachers in England should be issued to the teachers here, and also to the Inspectors. If that were done we should have, not a dull level of uniformity—that would be undesirable—but there would be a measure of similarity in the interpretation of the syllabus. Each Inspector at the present time interpreted the syllabus honestly, but very frequently what one Inspector considered an important factor in the syllabus another Inspector considered unimportant; and in that respect much of the freedom that was given to the teacher with one hand was taken away with the other. The whole trouble of the syllabus was merely one of interpretation. The teachers agreed with the principle underlying it. Teachers thought there was too much arithmetic, and that the work was badly arranged in the standards; but the difficulty could be very easily remedied. But beyond that, and one or two minor things in geography and English, they were quite in accord with the spirit of the syllabus. The New Zealand Educational Institute recognised this, and resolutions were passed urging that Inspectors should be placed under the control of the Department as far as the interpretation was concerned. If this were done, then the conditions under which the work of the primary schools was carried on would be such that practically no complaints would be heard about the syllabus.

Mr. GEORGE said the object of that morning's discussion was to deal with the primary-school work as it stood at present. Beginning at the bed-rock, he would like to say a few words in reference to infant-schools. As far as his observation had gone, that was at the present time the worst branch of the primary-school system, and required radical alteration. Like the Inspector-General, he had the advantage of visiting other countries a couple of years ago, and when he came back after seeing different parts of the world, and compared the infant-schools in some other places with those here—he spoke particularly of Auckland, but what was applicable to Auckland was perhaps generally applicable to New Zealand—he was struck with the inferiority of our infant-schools compared with, say, those of America. He thought that the training of teachers specially for infant-school work was a matter that required attention on the part of the educationists concerned. Our infant-schools in many cases were woefully understaffed at present. Another important matter was the question of girls' education as distinct from that of boys. No matter whether a girl took up any definite occupation after she left school, or whether she did not, the natural function of every girl was to become a wife and a mother; and the primary school should see to it that, as far as the foundations were concerned in connection with development in those directions, everything possible were done to educate the girl along the lines she ought naturally to go. He quite admitted that a great deal could not be done by the primary schools in that direction. A suggestion had been made as to lengthening the school hours. He would like to see improvements made in the ventilation, lighting, desk accommodation, and general equipment of the school buildings. If these improvements were made it would mean greater efficiency in the work of the children, and less fatigue. Again, the large number of pupils who left school and who drifted into occupations which did not offer them a bright future was astonishingly great. This was a problem that was agitating America and England, and one result had been the establishment of vocational schools. The Conference ought to consider whether the curriculum, especially above the Fourth Standard in the larger towns, should be modified so as to give a more vocational basis to the teaching of the older pupils. That system was being carried out at the present time with great success in London and New York. With reference to the work in the schools generally, the tendency of educationists all over the world was to make the schoolroom more of a laboratory and a workshop. He would like to say a word with reference to the pupils who came to the technical school after having passed through the primary school. It was seven years since he took up his present position in New Zealand. He must say that the English had decidedly improved in that time. He meant particularly in the form of composition and also as to the meaning of words. The work in that respect had decidedly improved: the children had better powers of expression, they wrote better, and they understood better. The object of teaching grammar was to enable a person to express himself better. There were people who wrote English quite well, but who spoke it badly: the reason was that in spoken language they depended on the sense of hearing. An effort should be made to teach children to speak more correctly, and it was most necessary that our school-teachers should speak good English. If the pupils did not hear good English spoken by the teacher, he did not know that any amount of teaching of grammar would cause them to speak accurately.

Mr. COUSINS thought it would be unwise if the Conference did not attempt to arrive at some definite ideas or conclusions on some of the topics under discussion. He proposed to submit for the consideration of the Conference a motion that would cover the general subject debated, and