

be much more clearly distinguished from the competency examination, and that it should be reserved for the best pupils to get a proficiency certificate. The question was a very important one as to what should be the condition of entrance to the free place in the secondary school. Another question arose with regard to district high schools. At the present time the conditions of a free place in a district high school were exactly the same as those for the secondary schools. The district high school had to serve a double purpose in a very great many places. It had to give the pupils all that it could give them of a secondary education as interpreted in the secondary schools, but it also had to be prepared to give a good many of them all the technical education that some of them were likely to receive, or the beginnings of a technical education. In country districts, if the district high schools did not do this work, the pupils would in many cases not get the instruction at all. Then there were the technical schools. At the age of thirteen or fourteen about 35 to 40 per cent. of those leaving the primary schools went to secondary schools, district high schools, or technical schools. He was speaking of technical day schools, which were really secondary day schools of a special kind. Thus there were left about 60 per cent. who left school presumably to earn their own living. That 60 per cent. the technical schools, if any institution, ought to provide for. One of the questions they would have to consider when they came to technical schools was in what way they ought to provide for them. In dealing with the subject now before the Conference they could not leave out of sight agricultural education. More than half of our industrial workers were concerned with agriculture. They could not afford to neglect that branch of study in the way it had been neglected by the farmers themselves in the past. The machinery existed now, but it was still neglected by the farmers.

Mr. BEVAN-BROWN said he had always been of opinion that the Department made a mistake in having the proficiency certificate as a qualification for a free place, in addition to the qualifications 3 (a) and 3 (b). He could see no reason for it. It might be urged possibly that qualifying for a scholarship was a little too hard—he did not think it was; but the junior free place examination was, in all conscience, an easy test to judge whether a pupil was fitted for a secondary school, so that it would be a profit to the State for that boy or girl to have secondary instruction. He admitted that a great many proficiency pupils were quite equal to those who passed a junior scholarship examination, but a great many of them were not. In regard to free places, he would like to see this adopted: that all children living within easy distance of a centre should be compelled to sit for the free-place examination—if not for a scholarship examination—in order to qualify for entrance to a secondary school. He did not think that would be a hardship at all. Country children might be allowed the privilege of a certificate of proficiency. In his opinion, the Department had retrograded in the last two years. Formerly the age for the (c) qualification was under fourteen. It had now been raised to under fifteen. He thought the test was insufficient and the age was too high. With regard to senior free places, he would lay down a rule that a boy in order to qualify must be under sixteen if he passed the Junior Civil Service Examination, and if over sixteen he must pass that examination with credit. At present, even if a boy was eighteen, and passed the Junior Civil Service Examination, he could get a free place. He thought that was making it too cheap. He brought this matter before the Secondary Schools Conference two years ago, but did not carry the majority of the Conference with him. At present the finances of the secondary schools were based on the large number of free pupils who earned capitation, and he could quite understand that it would make a tremendous difference, especially to some schools with small endowments, if the (c) qualification were suddenly cut off; but the difficulty might be got over by raising the capitation. He did not think it was to the advantage of the State to educate so many children free, possibly a third of whom hardly could be said to profit by secondary instruction as such. They often drifted off into book-keeping, which it was not really the province of a secondary school, as such, to teach.

Mr. GRAY said he dissented almost entirely from the views expressed by Mr. Bevan-Brown on the general question that scholarships for only a certain selected number were to be provided by our secondary education—using the word in its widest sense, and including technical institutions. The problem appeared to him in this way: that we should move entirely in the direction of retaining as many free scholars for as long a period as possible in our secondary schools. He was opposed to anything in the way of increasing the strain by way of competitive examination for our secondary schools, or for any schools at all. They had had enough of them, in all conscience. He was rather in favour of the idea of allowing scholars to qualify by way of credits, the masters of the schools acting in conjunction with the Inspectors in the matter. Competitive examination was one of the rampant evils at the present time throughout our whole education system. He thought that in the case of children going on under the free-place system to secondary schools—that is, the ordinary type of secondary school—the parents should give an undertaking that the scholars would remain at the school for a period of four years—for a long-enough time to profit by the course of education given there. One of the most serious evils that secondary schools had to contend with was this: that they had to deal with separate classes of pupils—some one-year, some two-year, and some three-year pupils. He was strongly in favour of vocational classes.

Mr. BRAIK said he thought the standard for admission to secondary schools should be higher than it was. If parents wished their children to go to purely secondary schools, by all means let them pay an adequate fee. He was perfectly certain that many of our proficiency-certificate pupils were a burden to the secondary schools, and were not likely to bring any credit to the State from their attendance at secondary schools. In regard to district high schools and technical schools, he would have no educational qualification beyond this: If a child had gone through a primary-school course, was of good character, and had done honest work, he would say, "You may go to a technical school or a district high school, and continue your education." It appeared to him that there was no use in continuing the proficiency examination. Under the conditions he had indicated he thought that any child ought to go free to any practical form of education that the