

in Standard VI of the public-school syllabus. As far as regards scholarship-holders, and those who qualify for free places by qualifying for the Scholarship Examination or by passing the Junior Free Place Examination, I believe that the standard is uniform throughout the Dominion. All candidates take the same examination. The scholarships awarded by the Education Boards are given on examinations held by the Department, the results being forwarded to the Boards; but as regards those who obtain free places through the certificate of proficiency the standard varies to some extent, as the Inspectors of the different districts do not, apparently, require quite the same standard of work for the certificate. It is extremely difficult to arrive at an exact judgment on the point, but that is the conclusion to which one appears to be driven from the facts. I see no reason why the Junior National Scholarships and the Education Board Scholarships should not be amalgamated into one system. You could call them all Junior National Scholarships or Education Board Scholarships. They should be awarded by the Education Boards on the results of a uniform examination, as at present—that is, if the system of scholarships is to be adhered to. As to the total number of scholarships, out of 563 that were held in 1910, there were 172 of the value of £20 and upwards. The remainder were of a less value than £20. I take it that the 172 approximately represented the number of scholarships held by country children in that year. I am not convinced that it is necessary with a free-place system to give scholarships to town children, or children living near towns, unless they be small scholarships, sufficient to pay for books and similar expenses. I consider that the money set free by adopting such a system as that might be devoted to increasing the number of scholarships awarded to country children. Some of the Education Boards have already moved in that direction. The necessity of giving scholarships under the present system is, of course, obviated by the fact that all those qualified for scholarships can get free places. Personally, I think there is a great deal to be said against the competitive scholarship system. The element of competition, and its effect upon some of the teachers and a good many of the teachers and children, is not altogether healthy. There is also, undoubtedly, a certain amount of hardship from the fact that some children may fail to get scholarships, either from the accidents of examination or from the fact that their best qualities are not tested in the examination, while others, either from special coaching, or special aptitude for examination-work, or from other causes, may win scholarships. Again, the standard reached by the lowest scholarship-winners may vary considerably from year to year, so that the degree of merit sufficient to gain a scholarship in one year may not be sufficient in another, even though you take the utmost pains to make the examinations of the same standard, and may succeed in doing so. I think that whether a boy or girl gets the help that is called a scholarship or not should depend solely upon the consideration whether he or she has reached the standard which has been settled upon as the standard for further work in a secondary school or a district high school. It might appear at first sight that it would be opening the door so widely that the probable expenditure could not be ascertained, but that has not been found to be the case with regard to free places. For departmental purposes it has been possible to foretell the number of free places very closely, simply by taking the average of the number of scholars qualified to hold such free places. In a similar way, having once settled the standard for the non-competitive scholarships, you could ascertain very closely the number that would probably gain those scholarships and take them up. I prepared a report on this question for the Minister some years ago, and will lay a copy of that report before the Commission later on. (See E.—1c, 1904). In the meantime I can give the figures approximately from memory. I take it that what would be desired would be to give country children in every respect and equal chance with town children. Therefore we should take the number of free places held by town children, compare those with the number that qualify by certificate of proficiency or otherwise, and take a similar proportion of country children, who, presumably, if they had a boarding-allowance, would be pretty well on the same footing with the town children, and take up their free places in something like the same proportion. Taking exactly the same proportion, I found, when preparing my report, that some fifty additional scholarships a year would be required. In revising the figures last year I thought that with the increase of population the additional number would now be between sixty and seventy per year, and I am sure these figures are not far astray. Forty pounds per scholarship is the highest amount I would propose to give. Personally, I should prefer to make it £35. Thirty pounds would be too low, but £35 might be enough. But, taking the amount at £40, the cost of sixty additional scholarships would be £2,400 a year, or, as the scholarships would be tenable for two years, £4,800 in all for additional scholarships. Some of that money—probably half of it—could be saved by reducing the number of town scholarships, or abolishing them altogether—at any rate, reducing them to £5 a year each, to allow for books and other requisites. The State would then have to find £2,800 a year in excess of what is found at present. In 1910 about £9,200 was spent, so under the system I have outlined the cost would be about £12,000. Having established your standard—not a very difficult thing to do if there is uniform examination, or a uniformity in the standard of the certificate of proficiency—every child who came up to that standard would be entitled, if his or her parents desired it, to get a scholarship, which would carry with it maintenance money and also a free place. As a matter of fact, the Boards have not found it possible to award scholarships up to the full extent of the moneys they might use. It is very difficult to spend all the money that is allotted for scholarships, because many scholarships are allowed to fall vacant, from various causes. So that really the increase is rather less on the estimates than even £2,800. I am quite aware of the argument that is sometimes used that many town parents have to make sacrifices to keep their children at secondary or technical schools. It is perfectly true that they have to make some sacrifices—they have to sacrifice the wages that their children would otherwise earn. Touching upon what is perhaps a political question, I do not think we ought, as a community, to give our sanction to the sacrifice of the children in order to help their families