

The School of Mines Ballarat 21st March
 Special Meeting of the Council } 1899
 to meet Mr Knox M.L.C. and
 Professor Kernot re sending a
 Representation to Conference convened
 by Chamber of Mines Melbourne
 Present The President, Mrs Anderson
 on the Chair Vice Presidents, Dr Pinnock
 and Hon R. J. Vale Councillors
 Mr Ricketts, S. E. Figgis, J. Louis
 Mr Lindsay, R. G. Chadwellton, A. D.
 Hewitt, J. D. Wanless. Apologies
 were received from Mr. His Lordship
 the Bishop, J. H. Quinn Hon R. H. H. H.
 Kernan and Hon E. Morry M.L.C.

The chairman introduced the visitors, who, he said, had come to lay certain views before them.

Mr Knox, M.L.C., said that he desired to thank them for the invitation, and he knew they would be glad to meet Professor Kernot. He had felt anxious for him to be present to represent the University. It was over two years ago that the Chamber of Commerce had a meeting of combined chambers in Sydney, and it was there thought desirable to form a Chamber of Mines, and this was carried into effect. But almost simultaneously the Geological Society of Melbourne formed another institution on similar lines, and as the two were really for the same object, after some negotiations amalgamation was brought about. Associated with them were a large number of mining men. He gave this history for the reason that they found, when they amalgamated, that the other chamber had issued a lot of certificates to mining managers. They thought that this was outside their privileges, as they were rather formed to protect investors' interest. The certificates were therefore suspended so as to allow of settling the question of whether the status of schools of mines could not be raised. To this end a conference was held, at which, unfortunately, the Ballarat school was not represented, and it was decided to send him up to Ballarat to tell them what were the objects of the conference. They were of opinion that the examining body should be the highest body in the colony, which they submitted was the Melbourne University. While not making invidious distinctions, it was recognised that Ballarat was the premier School of Mines, but, nevertheless, its certificate, however important, was local and narrowed in its effect. They had a certificate that showed a different class of teaching than that at Bendigo and Stawell, and employers of labor were often at a loss to know which was the better. They knew that in many of his mining ventures it had been necessary to import men. They were in a position to offer £1500 per annum to two capable metallurgists if they could get them here, but they had had to import them. He, as a native, said that there should be no need to send abroad for these men, and this could only be secured by uniformity of instruction, examination, and certificate, and only by the adoption of such a system could such men be drawn with confidence. He did not expect the Melbourne University to take control of the mining managers' examinations, but they wanted to be sure that a young man coming from these schools could go straight to the University and secure a certificate that would be equal to any that could be got in the world. He said it with the greatest respect; the school of mines certificate of this colony was not sufficient outside the colony. In Germany the two

largest schools, Freiberg and Kioththal, were independent of the Government; but the premier school that was now coming ahead was the Berlin school affiliated with the University. He did not urge on them that affiliation was the best thing, nor did the chamber propose to interfere with the prestige of the School of Mines, but it was recognised that there was something wanting in the higher technical education, and they simply wanted this school to join in a conference at which some scheme could be formulated to give the young men who attend the schools the opportunity of securing the advantages to be offered. They did not wish them to commit themselves in any way; the conference had no out and dried plan, but he believed that all were of the same mind, that successful results would issue from such a conference. They asked them as the most important mining school in the colony. It seemed to the Melbourne mining men that the industry demanded that it should be placed on the highest basis. They were essentially a mining community, and their prospects were boundless. It was therefore necessary to secure uniformity, and to this end to give men who wish to obtain the highest grades of the profession the best opportunity of doing so.

Professor Kernot said that from a University standpoint the movement was characterised by the utmost recognition of the splendid work already done, but they felt that an onward movement was necessary. The idea was as yet in a very crude condition, and they hoped in time to evolve something that would be of use to the community. They were disappointed at not seeing Ballarat represented at the conference. Mining was becoming a much larger thing than it was in bygone years. Instead of the simple methods of early days they had now a system of treatment that was extremely complex. It was not that they were dissatisfied with what had been done, but they wanted to expand, and to this end and to evolve a scheme they wanted the aid of the Ballarat School of Mines. They asked all interested in the higher education to assist in giving the youth of the colony a chance of getting positions that were now going begging. Plenty of good positions were awaiting men if they had the necessary qualifications. In other great schools the problem had been worked out, and why should not the Ministers and the Schools of Mines work in harmony in working it out in this colony. They only asked now that the chief School of Mines in the colony should come in and help them to elaborate a scheme binding the schools and the University together so that the students could go straight from one to the other.

Mr R. T. Vale, M.L.A., said that while the delegates had given them some information,

they could give some in return. He doubted if the huge prizes mentioned would be given in any case to a mere student. He took it for granted that the University could not give a better education than did the Ballarat School of Mines. He doubted if any university possessed better teachers than this school. They could only give vocal education, and it was for them to secure practical knowledge outside. He asked if there was anyone in the University who could give a higher education than the school. His political experience had led him into conflict with the University, and he found that Parliament had no control over it. Again, over 30 years ago the men of Ballarat had recognised the necessity of the school, and had founded it and seen it grow to its present proportions, and they did not wish to part with it now. They had been the means of getting hundreds of young men into comfortable positions. He asked the delegates again if the school did not afford as good a standard of education as any education in the world.

Mr Knox said that he had failed altogether to convey his meaning if they thought the conference had had the presumption to suggest such a thing. He had merely suggested uniformity of certificates, so that there would be no diversity in the standard of education between the schools in different parts of the colony. No student, of course, would take any position without practical experience. The two must run side by side.

Mr Wanless—Hear, hear; but in Ballarat—
 Mr Knox—In Ballarat or anywhere else. It is only because the University is the recognised head in the world from which certificates of merit are issued. If they established a medical school here, they would have still to have the University certificate, and mining metallurgy was equally as important.

Dr Pinnock said that there was no doubt that the idea was to have an examining board connected with the University to grant mining degrees equal to those of the old world schools. It seemed to him that it would be much easier if instead of expending the money required to establish a chair of mining at the University they should spend it in enabling local schools to come up to the required standard. He agreed that there should be a uniform certificate, but were the local schools to have any guarantee that the status of the teachers, the work, and school examinations would be recognised by the University.

Dr Pinnock—That is the scheme.
 Dr Pinnock—Well, that is a new and pleasant departure from what we have heard hitherto. But did the delegates think that any student here would get the splendid positions he quoted, even with a University degree. It was always the same in a young country—the tendency was always to send home for men. The same applied to the medical profession, where, although there is a medical school of a very high status, the authorities did not consider the standard of education high enough, and sent home for a health officer. His idea was that before this school took any steps they should be thoroughly well seized with the scheme to be proposed.

Professor Kernot said that although they sent for a health officer in one case it did not follow that they had not as good a man in their own schools. And this held good in law, where they had taken a purely local production as Chief Justice. And it also applied to the sewage scheme, where their engineer was a University man. With all respect to the gentlemen who had spoken, they looked for expansion in educational matters. He fully recognised the standard reached by the Ballarat School of Mines, but he submitted that there were possibilities in mining education not yet

dreamt of. If they were to breed men of the sort required, they must take a higher view of education, and attempt something on broader lines. But they were not bound down to any scheme, though they recognised that the University, as the head of the educational system of the colony, must be in it in some way. Of course, experience was necessary. No surgeon or engineer received his final certificate until he had in addition to his theory, added some practice. What was the very best work 20 years ago was not the same now. One might be well satisfied with one's own doing, but it was as well sometimes to see what other schools in other parts of the world are doing.

The chairman said that this school was modelled on the great school at Boston, and also of the Royal school in London.

Mr Vale—Some people think we are out of the world in Ballarat.
 Professor Kernot was sorry if he had ruffled anyone's feelings. But if they had such a lot of valuable information why not join in the conference, and aid them with it for the common good. He supposed that it would be admitted that there was some little knowledge in the Melbourne University, whose professors were chosen from the flower of the English Universities.

Mr Knox said that there was not the slightest desire to detract from the work done in the school, because all the student's work here would be credited to him at the University.

Hon. T. D. Wanless said that Professor Kernot had not put the case fairly. He was talking as if this school was in competition with the Melbourne University. (Professor Kernot—"Nothing" of the sort.) But he did. This school did not venture to compare with the University. He was one of those who initiated this school, and had watched its development, and had also seen with grief the attempts that had been made again and again to destroy it by Melbourne men. As soon as it became eminent jealousy in Melbourne set to work to undermine it, and had been at work ever since. This new scheme to get the mining schools centred in Melbourne was only a new development. Instead of supporting it as they should have, the Melbourne people had established a dozen competing schools in little mining centres, and had drawn away support that should have been afforded to Ballarat. He believed that this new idea was only to once more attack this school.

Dr Pinnock—It has been openly stated in Melbourne.
 Mr Wanless—If they want to foster mining education why not come to the place where the highest practical education is afforded—Ballarat.

Mr Nevett said that it occurred to him that this movement would eventually in the establishment of a school in or affiliated with the University. The very fact that students, as stated, would be allowed to go straight on to the University, contained in itself the element of danger. If a student went to the University it would cost his parents £120 per annum, and this meant that only the better class would be able to afford it. These movements for centralisation meant always the same—the aggrandisement of the centre to the detriment of the local schools. The Chamber of Commerce recognised the standard of education imparted at these schools, and he recognised that the time had come when the mining manager should have his mining tuition enlarged. But he thought the scheme proposed would result entirely in centralisation. The best method was to increase the powers of the Schools of Mines; there was no need to go to the University, because in the schools the students could get what they could never get in the University—practical teaching.

Mr Wanless—Not at Sale; that is a political school.

Mr J. M. Bickett said that he was glad to hear that this invitation was not that of the spider to the fly. He did not know if Mr Knox had a good memory, but he thought that gentleman had forgotten a certain meeting held on 1st March, in which Professor Masson said that he had been forced to tell a number of young men they would have to go to London, Berlin, or even Sydney, as there were no mining schools in Melbourne. He did not mention Ballarat. Another speaker had said that if a young man wished to secure a proper mining education he would have to go abroad. The chairman, who was Mr Knox himself, had moved a resolution affirming the desirability of affiliating schools of mines with the University. They had had a similar experience of the University before, and he would not trust himself to speak of the contemptible treatment they had received at the hands of the University. If it was another question of affiliation with the University, he was not on, and he would strongly advise the school to have nothing to do with the University.

The chairman said that he had an even stronger recollection of the University. He had had 45 years experience of public life, and he could say this, that no more discourteous treatment was ever meted out to anyone.

Professor Kernot said that the principal offender was a gentleman who knew nothing about mining.

Dr Pinnock—Why, there was more than one offender. Professor Harper was a very grave offender; he admitted that the proposed affiliation was never intended to be anything but a sham. While the Schools of Mines were perfectly prepared to affiliate with each other they were not inclined to affiliate with the University.

Mr Middleton said that the council was of opinion that the object of the conference—namely to raise the standard of the mining certificate—could be as easily gained by raising the status of the School of Mines as by affiliating with the University. The council recognised that the conditions of mining education had changed, and they had been appealing times out of number for assistance to secure the necessary plant to cope with the new condition of things; but, so far, he could see there were no funds for such things except when Sale wanted them. He said that if the Ballarat school was furnished with a proper plant they could turn out as good men as any university.

Mr Figgis said that Professor Kernot had inferred strongly that the school teaching staff was not in the same grade as that of the University. He would ask that gentleman if the University was in a position to take up the teaching of technical subjects now taught in the schools. With a tithe of the money required to fit up a mining school in Melbourne, the Ballarat school would be in a

position to engage the best of the world's professors.

Mr Wanless said that all the facts were against the delegates from Melbourne. What practical School of Mines was ahead of Freiberg, yet that school was not tampered with by the University of Leipzig, which was the biggest University in the world, and nearest to Freiberg. The mining people of Saxony had developed this school, and were proud of it. He asked again, did the Vienna University seek to destroy the Kioththal School of Mines? Melbourne University, however, was seeking to destroy the Ballarat School of Mines.

Mr Knox deprecated any such suggestion. He, for one, had no such intention. No one could gainsay that schools of mines, such as those of Freiberg, Kioththal, and Ballarat, with the means of practical knowledge at their doors, were in any way to be compared with a place that had no mining fields in its vicinity. What they wanted was a federation.

Mr Wanless—Under the University? The Freiberg school of mines is independent.
 Mr Knox—It is, certainly; but in London the School of Mines is affiliated with the London University.

Dr Pinnock—Only as an examining body.
 Mr Knox—Certainly, and that is all we want. The Ballarat School of Mines certificate, valuable as it is, does not claim the same distinction outside the colony as it does inside. All we want is to get a representative from this school to Melbourne to aid in evolving some scheme. He did not wish to add a sixpence to the cost of technical education.

Mr Middleton—Then, again, why not raise the status of the schools of mines?

Mr Wanless said that Ballarat students were to be found in all the mines of the world.

Mr Knox—That is so; they are welcomed in the mines.

Mr Wanless—Then why did you, as chairman of that meeting, allow Professor Masson to say that they had to send students to Sydney and other schools, and not mention Ballarat. He evidently was grossly ignorant of what he was saying.

Professor Kernot said that that was only Professor Masson's opinion. Why, they had at the Melbourne University a Ballarat student at present lecturing on mines, but Professor Masson condemned the Melbourne University as much as the schools of mines. He says that there is something that cannot be got here.

Mr Bickett—Which he says can be got at Sydney.

Dr Pinnock said that though Ballarat was not represented at the conference, the Bendigo and Maryborough schools representatives pressed the same points as the council had done that night, and yet the motion expressing the desirability of affiliation was carried, so what was the use of being represented.

The Hon. R. T. Vale, in moving that the thanks of the council be tendered to the delegates, said he would only mention one point. Ballarat was over run with students, but had not enough plant to enable them to study. Melbourne University had, as Professor Kernot acknowledged, magnificent laboratories, but no students. (Laughter.) He moved also, "That the consideration of the matter be made an order of the day for next council meeting."

Dr Pinnock seconded the motion which was carried, and after Mr Knox and Professor Kernot had acknowledged the vote of thanks the meeting adjourned.

Confornio
 R. T. Vale
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 14/4/99