

"EDUCATIONAL REFORMS WILL BE COMPREHENSIVE"

SAYS MR. BUTLER

Mr. R.A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, addressed the Shropshire branch of the National Union of teachers at Shrewsbury to-day (Saturday). Speaking of his proposals for educational reform, Mr. Butler said that he could well understand the impatience of those who wanted him to describe the scheme he had in mind. But occasional manifestations of a desire for final definitions were healthy, and did not detract from the general wish to seek accommodation, to co-operate and to maintain that spirit of unanimity and inspiration so happily typical of the country's war effort. "But for a short time ahead I must impose on myself an embargo on giving out snippets of policy bit by bit, and simply assure you that I intend that the final reform shall be comprehensive".

Those who were impatient at the rate of progress should look back on the deserts of apathy and indifference over which the caravan of education had had to pass, with but rare pauses for much needed refreshment in oases of temporary public attention. "I am clear" said Mr. Butler, "that we shall not only travel hopefully but arrive, and that the plan for education will figure prominently in the general pattern of social reform."

As it was far reaching ^{ive} administrative reforms, which would take many years to bear fruit, had also been initiated - a review was being made of the training of teachers and of the secondary school curriculum and examinations, and of the consolidation of the place of education right up to the age of 18.

Contrasting education in this country with the present situation in Germany, Mr. Butler referred to the recent German announcement that teaching was to be reduced to 18 hours a week to enable school children to take part in useful war work. Our own school week was 27 hours. In Germany classes were as large as 80 and even before the war the staff ratio was one teacher to 42 children as compared with our own one to 30. In our own schools nearly all children were now receiving full-time education and the staffing of our schools, thanks to the return of married women, fell little short of what it was before the war, despite the loss of some 25,000 teachers to the Forces.

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