

CONFERENCE NOTES.

TUESDAY 6th OCTOBER 1922 10 A.M.

The Minutes of the previous afternoon's session were read by Mr. Cox, and confirmed.

AUSTRALIAN DEAF & DUMB ASSOCIATION.

MR. ABRAHAM: Mr. Luff is really introducing this matter, but as a preliminary if the Secretary would be kind enough to read this extract from the Australian Journal of Education published in New South Wales of 1904, it will give the Congress an idea of the subject upon which Mr. Luff desires to speak. (On Mr. Martin's suggestion the extract was read by the Rev. A. G. Cutts.).

MR. ABRAHAM: The President of the Victorian Branch of this Association is in a position to inform you what was the result of that conference, and I believe it is his desire to impress upon this Convention the necessity of renewing the vitality of the old Association in his State and in South Australia.

MR. LUFF: Mr. Chairman, and Gentlemen, as you have heard the report read out it gives you a fair idea of the Commencement of the Association and its objects. It originated on that memorable Occasion when a record attendance of the Deaf of nearly all the States met in Melbourne in 1904, more than 18 years ago. I would like, therefore, to bring under your notice this worthy Association which was founded on that Occasion. It has the flower of the Deaf Community on its Committees, and they have pledged themselves to keep their eyes open for any injustice or oppression that may be placed upon the Deaf at large, and make every effort to alleviate such. It has adopted for its motto to alleviate and educate the deaf. Its sphere of action is the Commonwealth of Australia. Its operations will not clash with the operations of the Adult Deaf & Dumb Societies, because these Societies work for the Deaf, but this Association will assert their rights and try to secure their just claims to citizenship. They deemed that in this respect the deaf shall be equal with the normal. We have a General Board, which is the controlling factor and we had branches in four States, but there are at present only two in existence. This State and South Australia have allowed their operations to lapse, but Victoria and Queensland have stuck together, and the Victorian State has put its shoulder to the wheel and proceeded with what business they could. For instance, you have heard a few items read out in the report, how we managed to fight against the Marine Act and won the case? We secured promises of amendment, but as the operations of the Association were of a quiet nature, it appears that new Officers crept in to the Department who knew nothing about us, and it seems that the old restrictions are in force again. It behoves us to be up and doing and continually fighting for our rights.

Again, we in Victoria took up the cudgels for the education of the Deaf, and claimed the right for free and compulsory education. The school was founded by a Deaf mute under difficulties, and after a lapse of 50 years we opened our eyes to see the injustice the Government were doing in placing us Deaf and Dumb under charity, when with the normal people free education was a right. We approached the Department and got them to take over the scholastic part of the Instn. Not satisfied with that only, we approached them to reward Mr. Rose. If the school had been placed under the Education Department 50 years ago, Mr. Rose would have been entitled to a retiring allowance, so we fought for a pension. It was better than nothing.

We have a code of rules printed, and the subjects are plainly printed in booklet form. Now in recommending to your notice this Association and the good work that it will see the value of such an Association and the good work that it can accomplish. If there is any suggestion or motion made by this Conference, there is opportunity for the Association to carry on the work, because its scope of operations wider than the Conference or the Societies of the different States, cause its operations spread over all Australia.

We the existing Boards wish the other States to take them up, and join the Association, because the Association's operations and Officers are for a period of time from Congress to Congress. At the next Congress the Deaf and Dumb may be re-elected and have new Boards, and that would be an opportune time for this State to get on the General Board and work in harmony with us to educate and realise the status of the Deaf of the Commonwealth.

MR. SHOWELL: The Association is like this table if it had only two legs. It would be too good to throw away, but not safe to sit on. Well, I want South Australia and New South Wales to put in the other two legs.

MR. ABRAHAM: I am merely going to emphasise what Mr. Luff has said, if you don't mind Mr. Chairman. Well, the Australian Deaf and Dumb Association was formed in 1904, and they did me the honour to make me the President. Branches were formed in all the four States, and these were the objects:-

- (1) To unite the Deaf and Dumb and create interest in their welfare.
- (2) To advance and protect their interests and to alleviate their social status.
- (3) To give practical illustration of the capabilities of the Deaf and Dumb.

I may mention that the Congress was in every sense a gigantic success. We had the leading Deaf Mutes from every State and also (hor from New Zealand. There were about 200 delegates present, and altogether our various meetings and socials, etc. cost somewhere about £300. We had an exhibition of work done by the Deaf and Dumb which was open for a fortnight and drew crowds of the public, and was a material assistance in helping the deaf and dumb to obtain employment afterwards.

MR. COX: Was that Congress held in Victoria? A. Yes, it was held in Melbourne (no

MR. ABRAHAM: Ten years after there was another Congress of the Deaf, and the different States were asked to vote upon which place it was to be held, and on each occasion they voted for Melbourne. That was in 1904. The second Congress of 1911/12 was in Melbourne. We Melbourne Deaf are most anxious that the Conference should be held in rotation in the different States. Conference should be held in rotation in the States.

With regard to the resolutions that were passed, the Deaf and Dumb ultimately got the Act passed in Victoria. That was one of our resolutions, making the education of the Deaf and Dumb free and compulsory.

MR. MARTIN: In that instance did the School Committees and the Mission Committee join in? A. They all joined in, or rather, we had three deputations. The first deputation was to the Director of Education and was led by myself under the auspices of the Australian Deaf & Dumb Society of Victoria.

MR. MARTIN: Did the Deaf themselves put their case? A. Yes several of them were speakers. Mr. Tunley was one of the speakers.

MR. ABRAHAM: We made a stir in the newspapers with regard to the word "Asylum". That was all we could do at the period. As mentioned by Mr. Luff we succeeded in getting a pension from the Government for Mr. Rose, the Headmaster of the School, and the founder of the first educational school for the Deaf in the Commonwealth. And it was through the work of the Association that the Premier, Sir Thomas M. Bent, gave us £2,000, to start a farm, so the result of the Conference was at least good for Victoria. Queensland, too, did remarkably good work over there under the leadership of Mr. Showell and Miss Wilson. I dare say Mr. Showell could report on the work he succeeded in doing there. But for various reasons some trouble with school authorities

in New South Wales and a little misunderstanding in South Australia - the branches in N.S.W. and S.A. fell to pieces. We are most anxious that those two Branches should come in and affiliate with the gentlemen attending this Conference to bring those branches into existence? I think it would be very nice if you gentlemen would be willing to further the objects of this Association and in a way amalgamate with us, so that you could take office at the next Congress Meeting in connection with the Australian Deaf & Dumb Association.

Mr. Martin: What about Tasmania? A. Tasmania has not got Adult Deaf and Dumb Societies.

MR. SHOWELL: If you form a branch, I do not see why you could not go to the Government and get your £2,000.

Mr. FORBES: It occurred to me while Mr. Abraham was speaking that we are missing a very big opportunity in New South Wales. He stated that the Deaf, as a Deputation, waiting on the Minister for Education in Victoria and they were successful. Now, Mr. President and gentlemen, what an opportunity we have at the present moment if we would only go to our Minister of Education, taking with us from the Conference those who are deaf and dumb, in order to try and get compulsory education for the deaf and dumb children of N.S.W. I think we are just missing a great opportunity, and if there is no resolution before the Conference, I would move that this Conference consider the advisability of waiting upon the Minister of Education re this question.

MR. ABRAHAM: I think, Mr. Chairman you would stand a greater chance of success if such an appeal came from an organisation representing the whole of the Deaf and Dumb of the Commonwealth.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: If we were to go to the State Government as a Commonwealth Association, they would simply refer us to the Federal Government. That would be their loophole of escape at once. I think we are a little bit out of order, and I want you to confine attention to the subject matter actually in front of us - the joining formation of a Deaf & Dumb Association for the Commonwealth or joining in that one already formed.

MR. LONSDALE: I had a look through these rules just briefly, and I would like to know whether the idea of the Association is to combine the Deaf Mutes in an association ~~for the~~ or Local Committees. A. The idea is to combine the Deaf and Dumb and all interested in their welfare.

MR. LONSDALE: quite true, but is it an Association consisting of Deaf Mutes or Societies? A. It is to bring the Deaf and Dumb and all interested in their welfare together just as this conference is here to-day.

Q? You wish this Association to control the whole of the Deaf & Dumb organisations? A. To make recommendations just as this Association is doing now.

Q. That wipes out the Local Committees. A. Oh, no. We recommend to those Committees.

Q. That is, you take Control of the whole thing, and the Committees are superseded? A. Not at all, Mr. Lonsdale. You might just as well say that this Conference here are taking over the whole of the work of all the Deaf and Dumb Societies, but it is not. We are not here as an Advisory Board, as it were, making recommendations to all the State Deaf and Dumb Societies, and that is what the organisation does. It finds out information. For instance, this Conference has requested Mr. Cox and myself to find out certain information. Well, the Adult Deaf and Dumb Societies of the various States would write to the Australasian Deaf and Dumb Association to find the information that you have requested us to get. Then we distribu

MR. ABRAHAM: That Organisation does not in any way interfere with existing State Deaf and Dumb Societies.

MR. ABRAHAM: Excuse me.

MR. ABRAHAM: Excuse me, Sir, the main object of an Adult Deaf & Dumb Society is to provide religious services to visit the sick and others at their homes, and find them employment, to provide homes for the aged, infirm and mentally different and so on. We do not undertake any those objects not one of them.

MR. ABRAHAM: We have been going 20 years, Sir, and there has been no conflict.

MR. ABRAHAM: Mr. Cox is entirely under a wrong impression. The reason that the South Australian Branch fell to pieces was, I believe, that Mr. Johnston, the Headmaster of the School for the Deaf and Dumb of the State was against free and compulsory education, and he went and demanded that the Deaf and Dumb break up the Branch. I think that is the truth of the case; at any rate, that is the statement the Deaf themselves gave to me.

MR. BOOTH: Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I was one of the delegates from New South Wales and the time. It is quite true that things have been discussed and carried on the condition that the rules be sent to all the States for perusal, and the rules were made by Victorian alone. I believe when we received the rules they gave us a surprise because we were never consulted as to the true aims of the constitution, so the most intelligent of our De

members went through the rules, and we never advised their adoption. The chief reason for opposing the formation of an A.D.A. was because it would mean two societies in each State and would cause friction, and it is possible if any deaf and dumb have a grievance against the Society, they might make a breakaway, and would tell the Deaf and Dumb "We have nothing to do with your work. We cannot help you in Melbourne; you can do it yourselves". I warn you solemnly not to adopt the Scheme. For instance, on account of Labour associated with the different branches now, there have been many breakaways, which cause ~~xxx~~ trouble, trouble, trouble. Exactly the same thing will happen here if it is constituted. The big majority of the Deaf members have no interest in it. If it is formed the same thing will happen as with Labour Leagues. It is best to be under one control, that of the Board of Management. I am sorry to say that the Deaf & Dumb have very little business faculty, and we can trust the hearing Board to look after the interests of the Deaf and Dumb. They have greater influence with the Public than the deaf and dumb. They ~~xxxx~~ best way is to leave our troubles and disputes and grievances to the hearing Board of Management they will look after us very well.

MR. ABRAHAM: There is absolutely no reason why hearing members should not be a part of the Board of Management of the A.D.A., and if there is any thing of that character in the rules it can easily be altered at the next Conference. The Board elected is composed of such gentlemen as are elected by the whole of the members. I see no argument on the part of Mr. Booth at all.

MR. LONSDALE: Mr. Booth has got a very big argument here I think the rules in the book. I picked out that rule myself.

MR. ABRAHAM: The New South Wales representatives passed it.

MR. LONSDALE: I am not complaining about passing it. I just picked out a particular rule before Mr. Booth started to speak. Hearing persons who have spent three years of actual work among the Deaf teachers missionaries and secretaries of Adult Mission Societies may be admitted as members of this Association on the same conditions as the Deaf. Take our own Committee. We cannot get into that Association we are debarred absolutely. Mr. Mortlock cannot get into it; I cannot get into it. Mr. Mortlock has not been in this job three years, neither have I. Most of our members have not. Under this constitution it is impossible for us to take part at all in this Association. This is just what Mr. Booth said. Now, Mr. President, I want to do the very best thing I can for people. My presence here to day shows that I have some sympathy and interest in the show, but I do not think that this is the right way of doing it. To my mind there must be an Association or a Federal Body of the Societies. Every Deaf mute has the right and privilege of becoming a member of the Society, there is nothing to debar or stop him and they have the right of electing their officers. Why should we create another Society. Everything will be done by us for the advancement of the Deaf and Dumb. I believe that is the right way. My contention is that if you have two Societies, you will get the trouble that Mr. Booth has mentioned. You also heard what Mr. Cox said, and the reason they cut it out in South Australia.

MR. ABRAHAM: I think Mr. Cox has misled the Convention.

MR. LONSDALE: I do not think that Mr. Cox would deliberately mislead us, but there it is Mr. Abraham- something has gone wrong. I believe that there should be only one Association- one Federal Body.

MR. ABRAHAM: ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ That is what I am asking for.

MR. LONSDALE: One Federal Body of Control, and that should be the Societies and not the Association. I am anxious that we should have one governing body right round Australasia to govern and control and help these people. To my mind, only one Society can do it - that is the formation of a federal body of Societies or Institutes or what-ever you call them, and the controlling power to be left in the hands of those

bodies? Every deaf mute has his share in their election. If you are going to have two controlling bodies in this Commonwealth and that appears to me a waste of time and energy misapplied. There is nothing in the wide world to prevent a Federal body from having a Conference every year or every 10 years. I agree with Mr. Booth. I am a hearing man, and I think that if you will get a few hearing people into the control of your Society, you will get very much better results. We sympathise with these dear chaps here because we love them, but we think that they have not got just that ability to control the Association as it should be controlled. Under this constitution, very very few hearing men will be allowed in this Association. I do not even know that Mr. Martin will be allowed, although he has been for years and years a worker for the Deaf and Dumb. As Mr. Booth pointed out, this Association can be guided a good deal better under a Joint Committee of hearing members.

MR. ABRAHAM: Well, that is pretty rough on me. It was the New South Wales Society that invited the Australian Deaf and Dumb Association to send its President over there and found the Society, and now that the Australian Deaf & Dumb Association has founded this Society, New South Wales turns them down. It is beautiful. However, I can see the point Mr. Lonsdale is driving at. That article was at the time strongly opposed by me, but I was convinced in the end that the self-defence. That is, had they not put that clause in, the Board of Management of the Australasian Deaf & Dumb Association in its infancy might have been swamped with hearing and speaking gentlemen, in full sympathy perhaps with the Deaf and Dumb, but not with the knowledge to enable them to do that which was best as the Deaf as the deaf themselves thought for themselves. They had the feeling that their opinions would be swamped by outsiders, and it was a very natural feeling too. There is no reason however, why this constitution might not be altered in order to carry on the work on the lines that Mr. Lonsdale desires. There is no personal feeling on the part of any of the members. Our aim is to do all the good we possibly can; we are all out for that. At the time this was founded it was necessary that some outside organisation should take over the work. For instance, the work that was carried on here in New South Wales.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Might I just make a few remarks in regard to my attitude personally towards a federated Association. I am not going to rake up any ancient history. I know nothing at all of what happened before the last two years. I am very much inclined to the view taken by our good friend Mr. Lonsdale. I have only cursorily gone through the constitution, but I think several things there could be altered for the benefit of the Deaf and Dumb and the benefit of the Association, such as the point under discussion now, I think it ~~should be formed~~ a good thing to have a federated Association. I think it should be formed as an Association consisting of delegates or officers or Committees from the State institutions or societies. That would not debar the deaf mute from becoming a delegate and voicing the views of the deaf mutes themselves. And I think if we could consider carefully not just now - this matter of the alteration of the constitution, we might come to some arrangement whereby the Association, which is at present confined to Victoria and Queensland, should be vitalised and its operations extended, and possibly South Australia and New South Wales would see their way to join in. But I think so far as our State is concerned, it will have to be very much on the lines as roughly outlined Mr. Lonsdale.

MR. LONSDALE: Well, we just have the opposite there. If such an organisation is made up of representatives of we will say the Deaf & Dumb Societies and possibly the schools, it will consist mainly of hearing and speaking officers, and therefore the deaf will not have a controlling power but the hearing and speaking will. You can see that the idea of the Deaf is to have the controlling voice - 51% in any organisation - quite apart from the work such as is carried on among the Deaf and Dumb in the various States.

MR. LONSDALE: I am sorry that we had not some information before we started to talk, because we might go on talking for years. I move that the State Societies be recommended to consider and obtain date with a view to resuscitating the A.D.A. or the formation of a Federal Body.

MR. COX: I cannot see the advisability of forming a Federal Body or Association. If members of the Deaf and Dumb Societies meet in Conference, then that will certainly carry weight when they go back to our Societies, and the very fact that we have discussed this matter and approved and recommended it to other States ought to be sufficient to aid those Societies in obtaining what they require. It seems to me that it will be unnecessary to form another body.

MR. ABRAHAM: Here is a body holding conferences and making recommendations and carrying on work for 20 years, and now you say turn them out of existence and form another body.

MR. LUFF: I appreciate Mr. Lonsdale's suggestion for a Federal Body, and would ask what name it should be known under. A. That would be for future consideration.

MR. LONSDALE: The ultimate aim of the Association is to unite the whole of the Deaf of Australasia in a common brotherhood, and they would form their own controlling body.

MR. SHOWELL: I sympathise with Mr. Booth's criticism, and agree with the policy suggested by Mr. Lonsdale.

MR. LONSDALE: For instance look at Australian Federation. What has become of it? The Federal Government has too much controlling power over the States. Exactly the same thing would happen with our Societies. The A.D.A. might become very powerful and be able to overthrow the Societies' management.

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Chairman, the A.D.A. will never interfere with the work of the Deaf and Dumb Societies.

MR. TUNNEY: If you did not have the A.D.A. you would have ~~the~~ ^{the} not have got compulsion or those other benefits you spoke of.

MR. JOHNSTON: No, because no other organization would take up the work.

MR. BOOTH: The Local Deaf Committee would have sufficient power to approach the Board of Management if anything is wanted from them.

MR. MARTIN: In this suggested scheme, Mr. Chairman, is it intended that all the States the Missioner shall be ex officio the Chairman of the A.D.A.

MR. ABRAHAM: Mr. Martin, that would depend upon any rule or regulation made at a Congress Meeting.

MR. LONSDALE: We must abide by the present rules.

MR. MARTIN: It appears to me that there has been a good deal of misunderstanding. I am like some of you gentlemen, I do not know the inner workings of this difficulty at all. I recognise that the Victorian people through the Association were able to do something which was of benefit to the Deaf of Victoria particularly, and that was getting compulsory education for the Deaf. Now, Sir, I would point out that this Conference has agreed to recommend that to all the States. That was one of the outstanding points that resulted from the Conference of 1904. I may say, Gentlemen, that my son was present at that Conference. Each Deaf and Dumb Association throughout the States appointed delegates, and my son was one of those delegates. On many occasions, I have had to listen to his arguments in favour of what Victoria got, but I felt uncertain as to whether it would be right to stir the thing up again. The Principal of the educational institution had advised his Committee that subscription from the public would be reduced, and they would be wise to let this matter drop and not introduce compulsory education for the Deaf in South Australia.

I felt that Mr. Johnson was a man who ought to know, he has got the interests of the Deaf at heart and we ought to be guided by such an expert as he was. Although I have been a member of the Deaf and Dumb Mission Committee, for some eight or nine years, and have been deeply interested, as you may realise from what I have said here, in the Adult Deaf and Dumb as well as the little children, I have been uncertain as to which side I should take. I thought it would be wise when I was coming to this State to call at the St. Kilda Road Institution and get some information at first hand? From there I have come to this Conference. The Secretary assured me ~~that this was the best way to get the information~~ that compulsory education has worked splendidly, and since we have been at this Conference, Sir, I have realised that practically all the States are at a disadvantage in that they do not know whether the whole of the Deaf are being educated or not. If we want children to be made good citizens we all know that it is desirable that they should be educated - no matter whether normal or abnormal, and it appears to me that education is even more important in regard to the Deaf than for the normal child. If I had not taken a special interest in the early stages of my dear boy's life, he would never have been able to take the position that he can take now. ~~There are many parents under very different circumstances to myself~~ situated perhaps in some remote parts of the different States, or have sent a recommendation form this Conference to all the States hope that some one will advise the best course to take in all the outline. I can conceive that a deputation to the Minister of ~~the~~ Education, headed by a man like the Victorian President of the A.D.A. in order to show him what can be done for the Deaf if properly educated, must have some weight. I am sincerely hopeful that this Conference will not stifle discussion. Some of us have come a long way and we are deeply desirous of doing the very best we can for the deaf community throughout the Commonwealth, and I for one do not care if we sit here for whole of the week. We have in the different States different electoral districts. We can take the Deaf as being an electoral division who have no representation by forming themselves into an association, and wisely guided by their Missioner, they from their standpoint will be able to put forward suggestions which they think will be for the welfare ~~of~~ of their institutions without interfering with the general working. I think they are wise to have such an association, I quite agree with Mr. Lonsdale that if it can be merged into this and all work for the same end and be controlled by the same body, a Federated Committee, right throughout the Commonwealth, it will be very helpful indeed. I sincerely hope that we shall give this matter the fullest consideration.

(Discussion)

MR. ABRAHAM: It is my desire to get the Adult Deaf and Dumb Societies to lend a sympathetic ear in this matter, and to get their representatives such as their Missioners and men who have experience among the Deaf and Dumb, to act as advisers. For instance, supposing a Branch is formed in South Australia among the Deaf and dumb themselves. That is a branch of the Australian Deaf and Dumb Association composed mainly of Deaf and dumb people, but Mr. Cox would be eligible for any post, President, anything. It is a great factor if we can have men like Mr. COX as a member of that organisation as a leader and guide to them, where as if they form the Association themselves and leave us out, difficulties may arise and there would be no one to take a sympathetic interest in their organisation and prevent it possibly from interfering with the work of other Deaf and Dumb Societies.

RESOLUTION:

"That the State Societies of the Deaf & DUMB recommended to consider and obtain data with a view to:

- (A) Re-forming the A.D.A. or
- (B) The creation of a Federal Body of State Societies, and to report on this and any other matters relating to the Deaf, to a Conference to be held in 1923".

CARRIED

Proposed by MR. LONSDALE

ADJOURNED UNTIL MR. LONSDALE AFTERNOON

230 p