THE VICTORIAN AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS: ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND FAILURE

With special reference to Ballarat, Sale, Shepparton and Wangaratta Agricultural High Schools

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The agricultural high school has been described as a secondary school with an agricultural bias, a somewhat contemptuous comment on a high-sounding title. The bias, however, is so slight as to be almost imperceptible. "Technical schools", "musical conservatoria", "schools of mines" or "kindergarten" would be equally relevant... We are only playing with agriculture when we establish agricultural schools that specialise in music and French.

Age, 23 December 1913.
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Throughout this thesis, the following abbreviations are used:

Parl. deb. - parliamentary debates (Hansard).

P.P. - papers presented to parliament.

P.R.O. - public records office.

nn. - some Education Department files have numbers, and some do not. When a number is evident, it is quoted. When no number is evident, the abbreviation nn. is used.
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ABSTRACT

The concept of the vocational secondary school is not unique to Victoria and, as in other places, the questions of its origin, development and success or failure are integrally tied to the political, social and economic conditions of its environment.

The agricultural high schools of Victoria, established in the first decade of this century, were not, as some would have us believe, poorly considered experiments proposed by a few optimistic educators in a fledgling State which provided education for its children only up to grade six level. Rather, they represented the first major move by an ambitious young Director of Education, Frank Tate, into a field hitherto dominated by independent interests. That they were vocational, that they were rural, was determined by the political and economic realities of the time: that they were failures was determined by the liberal philosophies and, therefore, approach of Tate and other department men, and by the social realities in a State where industrialization and resultant social mobility militated against any attempt to keep the boys "down on the farm".

Poorly constructed, and unwanted by the rural populace, the vocational aspect of the agricultural high schools was, in the main, dysfunctional to the composition of Victorian society, and the thinly veiled contempt of the Education Department could be seen in the words and deeds of its administrators. But they had to pay lip-service to their political masters, and the facade was necessarily maintained until long after the passing of the 1910 Education Act, the composition of which, had Tate been so allowed, would have brought to fruition his dream of a large and integrated State secondary system.

When it finally disappeared from the Victorian educational
scene, the agricultural course was lamented by few. It had been, however, the necessary medium through which the initial steps along the road to a State-wide system of secondary education had been taken. The schools lived on, as district high schools, and helped to provide the model for that system.
CHAPTER ONE: THE BACKGROUND

It will be found that the key-stone to the progress of a self-governing people is the recognition that national efficiency depends on national training. And the reform of technical instruction must be accompanied by a strengthening of the forces of every branch of the national system of education, of which this but forms an essential part.

(P.P. (Vic.), 1901, vol.2, no.29
Royal commission on technical education:
Final report on technical education,
p.261)

Writing in reference to the causes of the failure of the agricultural course in Victoria's agricultural high schools, the Chief Inspector of Schools, Martin P. Hansen, commented in 1915 that "these causes may lie partly in the schools themselves, either in their management or the course, but they certainly have their main roots in our present economical and industrial position". The reasons presented by Hansen are both cogent and acceptable, but to accord to them the belief that they tell the whole story is to grossly oversimplify what is, in fact, a very complex story. That story, of the origins, development and failure of Victoria's agricultural high schools between the years of 1907 and 1917 (when the word "agricultural" was semi-officially deleted from their titles) is one that involves not only bureaucratic inefficiency and socio-economic reality, but also politically motivated guile and manipulation, which influenced the very structure of the schools and, thereby, their success, and which was inextricably bound up in

the whole movement to establish government-controlled post-primary education in this State.

The background to the agricultural high schools determined their concept, but not their final format. The Education Act of 1872 had provided for a free, compulsory and secular education for the children of Victoria. However, by 1900, the weaknesses of this Act were very evident. The great majority of primary school children were leaving school, either having completed the Merit Certificate or having turned fourteen, the minimum leaving age. In fact, many were leaving before the age of fourteen, having obtained exemptions on compassionate grounds. Because the colony did not provide for secondary education, very few children progressed to it - in 1908, for example, the Minister of Agriculture, George Swinburne, quoted the figure for that year as being only five per cent.² Those who did undertake secondary education at independently-run schools, either proprietorially- or corporately-owned, were, because of the high fees charged, generally members of the privileged classes undertaking a classical education designed to lead to university entrance. As J.F.A. Lack has commented in his thesis on Melbourne High School,³ winning one of the few scholarships awarded by the government or by some of the private schools was the only chance a child of poor parents had of gaining a secondary education.

This state of affairs appears to have been generally accepted during the two decades of prosperity after the passing of the 1872 Act, but the colony was severely jolted out of this condition of


"careless optimism", to use A.G. Austin's phrase, by the onset of a nation-wide depression in the early 1890s. As Austin comments, "the depression called into question the country's industrial and commercial inefficiency", and it destroyed the illusions of many as to the continuing prosperity of Victoria and her ability to compete successfully in a changing and industrialising world.

The soul-searching that accompanied the decline of the depression led to thoughts of reconstruction, and several groups began to push the education question as a major issue. In particular, David Syme, owner of the influential <i>Age</i> newspaper, began a systematic survey on technical education in the colony after manufacturers had blamed bad workmanship upon inadequate education. The efforts of Syme and others revealed two major requirements that could be seen as being, in many ways, conflicting in their purposes. The first was the need for further technical, vocationally-oriented education for the ninety-five per cent of children who did not go on to secondary school. The <i>Age</i> had noted that Victoria's technical institutions were largely inefficient because of the inadequate elementary preparation that was being given to students to enable them to undertake subsequent technical studies. It was the recognition of this which led to the establishment of a royal commission on technical education in 1899.

The second requirement arose out of the fact that the depression hit Victoria, Australia's most industrialized colony, the hardest of all, and had exposed an unevenness in the economy. At a time when all political groups in Victoria were concerned, as P.J. Worsnop has recorded, with balancing the budget, reducing unemployment and


5. Ibid., p.258.

stimulating a flagging economy, the encouragement of different
types of farming seemed the easiest and quickest way of achieving
greater equilibrium. A belief arose, as S. Murray-Smith\(^7\) points out,
in the primary industries as a stabilized base, both moral as well
as economic, for the community. This belief was undoubtedly
influenced by a contemporary world trend of concern for rural
interests and occupations, a reaction against creeping industrialism,
tar and cement. It was perhaps best represented in the American
Populist political movement, and R.J.W. Selleck\(^8\) sees it also as
being directly influential in the development of the "New Education"
movement, closely related to the efforts made to interest school
children in citizenship and their future occupations.

Thus, on the one hand, there was an expressed need for increased
technical education to improve the standards of secondary industry in
the urban areas: on the other, a desire to lessen the dependence
placed upon that industry. It was this dichotomy, combined with the
considerable power of rural political interests, which largely shaped
the form that State-controlled post-primary education was to take
after its establishment in the first decade of the new century. Its
substance, however, was another matter.

The royal commission on technical education, popularly called
the Fink Commission after its Chairman, Theodore Fink, was set up by
the Turner Government in 1899 in response to the criticisms of
Victoria's education system. It was undoubtedly one of the most
influential in the complex of factors which created the cultural and

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8. Quoted in B. Bessant, Education and politics in the development
of the education systems of NSW and Victoria 1900-1940, with
particular reference to post-primary education, Ph.D. thesis,
political climate in which the Victorian Education Department could establish ten agricultural high schools by 1913. The commission's reports reveal that the two views mentioned above were pre-eminent in its considerations, and two aspects of its findings had a direct influence upon the composition of the agricultural high schools. It seems obvious as well that those considerations took account of the political and economic realities of the time. A.M. Badcock has pointed out that the commission seemed to take for granted a well-demarcated dualism in society, for the educational improvements it suggested would, to use its statement, "in no way interfere with the existing secondary or public schools, or encroach upon the province of secondary education".  

This consideration was probably related to two potent factors operating within the contemporary political scene. First, there was a need for financial restraint, and this precluded the possibility of establishing a full system of post-primary schools. This was a period of recovery from the effects of a very bad depression, and there was an awareness of the dangers of overspending amongst the members of the government. If they did not have this awareness in 1900, it was certainly there by 1902. G.A. Reid attributes the fall of the Peacock Government in that year to the wrath of "an electorate still mindful of the horrible lessons of the 1880s and 1890s [which] would not tolerate the slightest hint of increased expenditure". In such an atmosphere, the establishment of a full State system of


10. Teachers and bureaucracy - a comparative study of the administration of State post-primary education in New South Wales (1880-1922) and Victoria (1900-1928) with special reference to the growth of the State post-primary teaching services under Peter Board and Frank Tate, Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1974, p.80.
secondary schools obviously could not be entertained.

Secondly, the independent school interests in Victoria were, at this time, still very powerful, and represented a potent pressure group in the political scene. As shall be seen, this group made continual complaints about the State's intrusion into what it regarded as being exclusively its sphere long after the opening of the first government-run post-primary school in 1905. The reasons for the considerable influence of this group are difficult to discover. Badcock\(^{11}\) suggests that the "laissez-faire" attitude of the nineteenth century lingered longer in Victoria than in some other States, to say nothing of New Zealand, the United States and Europe. However, he presents no viable reasons to support this argument, so it really provides no answer. It may be that the influence of the independent school interests was of an indirect nature inasmuch as the bulk of the membership of the Victorian Parliament was conservative in nature (the Labor Party had not yet become established as a potent political force) and in all probability educated at independent schools, and thus reluctant to see an old, established and familiar system supplanted by a new, State-controlled one. This may have been in spite of the fact that, as Reid\(^{12}\) has put it, the education provided at many of the secondary schools was, at best, narrowly academic and at worst grossly inefficient.

Within such a framework did the royal commission operate, and the basis of its prognostications was that

...the class of students for whom provision would be made...will be largely the children of the working classes who will ultimately have to support themselves by manual work, and the instruction afforded would differ distinctly from secondary education,


which has for its main object the training of young men destined for the professions.\textsuperscript{13}

When it investigated the situation in education, it found that

The evidence submitted to us by manufacturers and working tradesmen alike clearly shows that the average standard of educational equipment is insufficient to enable lads to enter upon their apprenticeship and fully benefit by trade or technical instruction. This undoubtedly points to the need for a higher degree of primary education than that at present obtainable. The greatest necessity exists also for some decided action by the State in counteracting the baneful effects of a State school curriculum hitherto almost exclusively literary in character, by which a prejudice against manual occupations has for many years been indirectly created, and we can conceive of no better corrective of this danger and false sentiment than the adoption of a scheme of continuation schools.\textsuperscript{14}

As their title implied, these schools were to continue directly on from the State school, and were to be distinct from the technical school in organization and curriculum. The commission was quite clear about their function. They were to serve

...the double purpose of completing the State school education and providing a solid groundwork for the pursuit of higher studies in the State technical schools.\textsuperscript{15}

With these considerations in mind, and being aware of the diversity of occupations extant in the colony, Fink and his fellow investigators recommended that

The curriculum of the schools should not be uniform, but should be devised so as to bear some relation to local conditions and requirements. Provision should be made for the continuation of instruction in the subjects prescribed for the highest class of the State schools, and in addition, the curriculum should include the following subjects: mathematics, experimental science, manual training, drawing, commercial arithmetic and geography, shorthand, and modern languages.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.22.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.22.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.24.
Following the second of the two considerations mentioned above - the need for increased emphasis upon agricultural pursuits - the Fink Commission devoted a substantial section of its report to the promotion of agricultural education. Its fourth progress report was totally concerned with that subject, and looked at the situation in the field in Britain, Europe and the United States, as well as in the other Australian colonies. Relying upon grossly inadequate figures provided by the government statistic,* the commission referred to "the importance of the agricultural industry to the colony of Victoria, involving as it does the employment of a larger number of persons than any other industry, and being the most important factor in our national wealth", and it concluded that there was a need for "a properly organized and efficient system of technical education in relation to agriculture". It finally advocated the inclusion of agriculture as a subject in post-primary as well as primary schools. However, apart from stating a belief that an intermediate agricultural school should be established at the Burnley Gardens horticultural centre in Melbourne, it made no specific recommendation for the establishment of agriculturally-oriented post-primary schools. It did, however, refer approvingly to the Freme Road Agricultural School, established in Adelaide by the South Australian Government in 1897, as "providing for instruction in the years intervening between primary school and that for admission to the Higher Technical Colleges". This experiment appeared to the commissioners to be a "most admirable one which affords an example

* 76,454 males and 6,028 females engaged in agricultural work - no mention of numbers in other sectors of industry, (P.P. (Vic.), 1900, vol.2, no.19 (Royal Commission on technical education: Fourth progress report on technical education), p.111).

17. Ibid., p.10.
18. Ibid., p.10.
19. Ibid., p.112.
which our own colony might follow with advantage".\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, by 1900, there was the emergence of what Reid\textsuperscript{21} describes as three fundamental conceptions of the role of State post-primary education in Victoria. First, secondary education in its traditional form was to remain the preserve of an intellectual élite, regardless of capacity to pay; secondly, higher primary or continuation schools should not conflict or compete with the established interests of non-government schools, and, thirdly, there was a need for a practical curriculum catering for the needs of agriculture, industry, commerce and the trades, but not the professions. The Pink Commission recommended something else as well - the establishment of the position of Director of Education - and the actions and influence of the first man to occupy this post, Frank Tate, cannot be underestimated when consideration is made of the pattern in which events leading to the establishment of the first State post-primary schools developed.

\* The curriculum of this school comprised advanced arithmetic, bookkeeping, algebra, Euclid, mensuration and land surveying, mechanical drawing, composition and spelling, botany, English literature, theoretical and practical agriculture, fruit culture, viticulture, chemistry and physics, carpentry and dairying. The course was specifically designed to prepare the boys to enter the agricultural college at Roseworthy or the school of mines and industries. (Fourth progress report, p.111).

20. Ibid., p.112.
CHAPTER TWO: FRANK TATE, THE MAN AND HIS MOTIVES

Mr. Tate [137] the John Knox of Victoria (voice: of the Commonwealth) in the matter of education. He is doing here in education what John Knox did in Scotland as regards religion - establishing schools wherever they are wanted.

John Sutherland, chairman of the Shepparton Agricultural High School Advisory Council, introducing Frank Tate at a lecture evening (at which members of the visiting Scottish Agricultural Commission were present).*

Any consideration of State involvement in Victorian education during the first three decades of this century must focus, to a large extent, around the character of Frank Tate. While it would be a mischief to attempt to create the impression that, under Tate's leadership, the Victorian Education Department was a 'one-man band', and thus ignore the contributions made by such men as Martin Hansen and Donald Clark, it is nevertheless true that Frank Tate had a profound influence. This was the case because, first of all, in the days before the development of political parties as we know them today, there was extreme instability in the Parliament, resulting in so many different governments that few Ministers of Public Instruction had the chance to come to grips with the portfolio (in the period from his appointment in 1902 to 1917, Tate served under no less than nine different ministers). Consequently, Tate's expertise often determined policy.

As he himself commented:

As Australian Ministers for Education are but rarely appointed for their knowledge of and interest in educational problems, progress under a centralized system depends very greatly upon the strength of the Director of Education and his professional officers. Indeed, it sometimes happens that the preparation of the public to accept a progressive policy involving substantial

* Shepparton news, 15 November 1910.
changes is dependent upon the ability and enthusiasm of public servants.1

As well, Tate's dominant personality played a vital role. J.F.A. Inch has summed this up very well:

The success of the campaign to establish the first of the State secondary schools can be attributed to Frank Tate more than to any other single person. An indefatigable worker and publicist and a particularly skilled politically-minded administrator, he was successful in overcoming quite formidable opposition and winning the support of influential sections of parliament and the public.2

To put it simply, Tate was the catalyst, the prime mover in the quest to establish schools for education beyond the primary stage in Victoria.

An understanding of Tate's ideas is essential if we are to fully comprehend his purpose in establishing the first post-primary schools. What kind of a man was he? To use his own words, he had

...been in the service of the Education Department since 1877 and during that time.../had had a very varied experience as pupil teacher, student in training, assistant teacher, head teacher, lecturer in the Training College, officer in charge of the metropolitan centre for pupil teacher instruction, inspector of schools, and principal of the Training College.3

The writings he produced whilst an inspector in the Charlton District between 1895 and 1899 reveal that, as regards education, his thinking was decidedly liberal. Selleck tells us that, like Ruskin, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and others, Tate turned away from industry and mechanization and looked for society's salvation in the development of the individual mind and sensitivity for its own sake. He wanted

schools to cultivate "all those marks which defined a high type of
cultured manhood". His concern, says Selleck, was with the
individual's character and qualities, not his social environment or
his future job. He was "hoping to produce a gentleman, Victorian
both geographically and historically". He appears to have been quite
vain with regard to the necessary qualities of such a gentleman.
Nothing, it seems, would have been finer than a character moulded in
his own image. He wanted his social values, customs and manners to
permeate the rest of society, "especially in the Mallee where,
particularly in housing and feeding, 'the people seemed to be
relapsing into animalism'". Tate's whole line of thought seems to have been concerned with
such 'gentlemanly' attributes, attributes which would obviously be
best cultivated by a liberal education. To him, the education system
provided by the State was both illiberal and inefficient. Along with
other departmental officers, he was vocal in criticizing that
inefficiency together with what he saw as an excessive concentration
upon the "three Rs" and the retention of the odious "payment by
results" system. Tate believed that government involvement in post-
primary education was necessary in order to train more efficient
teachers, and his thinking here may have been influenced by a belief
that only more highly educated and trained teachers would be likely
to be able to break out of the restrictive bounds already described
and impart that truly liberal education needed to produce his
Victorian gentleman. Writing in 1897, he expressed concern about

5. Ibid., p.66.
6. Ibid., p.67.
what he saw as the inadequate training of teachers under the pupil teacher system, and he advocated the establishment of a training college for junior teachers. Such a college, he said,

...is not a mere high school for giving general culture, although this is by no means to be neglected. Every subject is studied around one central point - teaching...Pupil teachers, even with a generously framed syllabus of work, cannot help being as a class narrow and uncultured...the college student has been matured...and under the right influences he begins to be for the first time a student - one who loves knowledge for its own sake, and not for its market price.  

As shall be seen in chapter three, this conception was used by Tate as the basis for the first State post-primary school, the Melbourne Continuation School.

Thus it can be seen that, in the latter half of the 1890s, Frank Tate's ideas on education were undoubtedly liberal, and opposed to the narrow concept of vocationalism. However, while his ideas in this direction may be described as being unrealistic in the context of the post-depression recovery described in chapter one, his line of argument in the wake of the Fink Commission reveals that his head was far from being in the clouds where the question of political realism was concerned. By 1904 he had moved away in his utterances from a concern for personal goals in education and had adopted the pragmatic line prescribed by the commission. As shall be shown in greater detail in chapters three and four, Tate's desire was to establish State post-primary schools, wherever and whenever he could, but he was limited by the Fink Commission's dicta (later embodied in the 1901 Education Amending Act) to the establishment of vocationally-oriented schools only in the first instance. His change of emphasis

between the late 1890s and 1904 could be interpreted in the context of his awareness of what he could and could not do with regard to those schools. If he wanted to establish post-primary schools, then he would have to bend with the wind - and bend he did. While still emphasizing the need for education for culture, he now talked about it in the context of national goals. At one stage, he commented:

Victoria must follow in the track of other communities or lose ground. The competition of the future will be between efficient peoples who add scientific training to their industry and knowledge to their ambition... Education has now become an industrial question... 8

Tate now repeated the royal commission's recognized need to "bridge the gap" between primary school and the technical college and, to support this argument, he compared the situation in Victoria with that in other countries, most notably Prussian-led Germany, which had established State secondary schools.* B. Bessant 9 is correct in noting that Tate was arriving at such conclusions from practical rather than pedagogical premises, but it is arguable, given Tate's background, as to whether this occurred, as he believes, completely as a result of a preoccupation with the idea of national progress being inextricably bound up with national education and national efficiency. If this was the case, then Tate had made a complete

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* One has to keep in mind the fact that the depression had sparked many fears concerning the efficiency of Victoria's secondary industry. One also has to remember that the first decade of this century witnessed a race for armaments and influence between Great Britain and Germany, and the fledgling country of Australia was still very closely linked to the mother country at this time, and deeply involved in the rivalry. Educational and industrial comparisons such as Tate's were rife during this period.


about-face in his educational thinking within the space of a few short years. When we consider the context of this change in approach - the Fink Commission, the resulting Education Act, Tate's appointment as Director of Education - a position created by that Act, and the politico-economic situation - then it seems more plausible, perhaps, that Tate was making use of this scenario to begin, slowly but surely, a scheme of State secondary education for all which would bring into creation his ideal society of Victorian gentlemen.

Frank Tate's comments and actions after the establishment of State post-primary schools suggest that, while he may have seen the need for vocationally-oriented subjects in the school curricula, they were to be recognized as supplementing the general education of the child, not supplanting it. Even before the opening of the first post-primary school in 1905, he let slip his real feelings about the type of education that he felt was needed on a number of occasions. In 1902, for example, at the seventeenth annual conference of the State School Teachers' Union, we find him paying lip-service to the government's desires in saying:

The higher primary or continuation schools were not designed to compete in any way with the recognised secondary schools, nor to give general culture. The aim was to do a little more than the primary school, and to specialize a boy's education so as to fit him for some special trade or occupation.10

[My emphasis]

However, by 1904, on the eve of the opening of the first State post-primary school, we find Tate far less circumspect, and talking about general education, as opposed to vocational, in the State context. Now he was saying that

Sooner or later, Victoria must face the question of the State supplying a more advanced education than that now given in the State school. So long as higher primary and secondary instruction are in the hands of private individuals, general education in Victoria must suffer...11

Frank Tate was obliged, due to considerations of a political nature, to subjugate his inner thoughts on education if he was to be allowed to establish post-primary schools of any kind. He was a man of profoundly humanist conviction, says Murray-Smith, but "there were overwhelming tactical considerations which must have strengthened his convictions that the argument for post-primary or super-primary education had to be based on utility".12 Undoubtedly he described his own situation years later in writing that

...the Director and his officers are public servants, and, accordingly, cannot speak as freely upon educational needs and upon educational policies and practices as the situation demands. An aroused public opinion may be necessary before an indifferent or reactionary Minister or Government can be persuaded to make an educational advance. Too often the mouths of those who understand best what is wanted for educational efficiency are sealed.13

As Reid14 puts it, while giving frequent public reminders to the government of his lack of power to effect desirable reforms, Tate was astute enough to continue, with commendable purpose and tenacity, to prepare the way for the implementation of reform when the situation allowed it. By 1905 the climate had become more suitable, and the Melbourne Continuation School was opened. The story of this school


13. "Rural school administration", loc.cit., p.84.

cannot be separated from that of the agricultural high schools, as Tate was possessed of the same motives in establishing both types of institution. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, it is said, and an analysis of the origins and nature of the Melbourne Continuation School reveals that its aims and substance were a far cry from those envisaged by the Fink Commission when it advocated continuation schools. In spite of its ostensible purpose, this school was distinctly non-vocational in nature, and this leads one to believe, as Reid notes, that Tate must have had, as his ultimate aim, even before 1905, the entry of the State into all aspects of secondary education.

15. Ibid., p.124.
CHAPTER THREE: THE FIRST STATE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL.

The question should be looked at...not so much from the point of view of competition with vested interests as from the point of view of national well-being. The unpleasant fact for Victorians to face is that there is no portion of the British Empire of the Importance of Victoria where so little is done for secondary education out of public funds.

Frank Tate,*

In the years between the Pink Commission and the opening of the Melbourne Continuation School in 1905, Frank Tate was constantly comparing the poor situation of Victoria as regards the provision of post-primary education with that of other states and other lands. In his report to the minister in 1904, he spent a considerable amount of time in describing the high school systems in the United States and New Zealand. As a preamble to this description, he noted that "every country which has realized a worthy ideal of national education has established advanced schools controlled and wholly or partly maintained by the State",¹ and he aptly described his own position and role in quoting the London Times on the establishment of local education authorities in England:

When the country really wishes for a sound educational system, and determines to have it, it will get what it wants. The machinery is there; what is needed is to generate the steam or electricity for driving it.²

The impetus came in the same year, when the reform ministry of Thomas Bent took office on the resignation of William Irvine, whom Worsnop

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* Argus, 1 April 1907.
2. Ibid., p.35.
describes as being a reactionary.\(^3\) Bent, he comments, had no more definite policy on education than that he would offer an opportunity to the child with brains.\(^4\) The Premier was undoubtedly reacting to an insistent demand which had arisen, as both Reid\(^5\) and B.K. Rule\(^6\) have suggested, from people unable to secure a State scholarship to a public school, and it was he who provided Tate with the first financial grant for State post-primary education. This demand was no doubt kindled by the findings of the royal commission on the University of Melbourne, which recommended in 1904 that, "it is essential that a sound system should provide for the re-organization of secondary education".\(^7\)

The grant allowed for the establishment of a continuation school, and Tate very quickly set it up in an old elementary school building in Spring Street.* However, the only real similarity between it and the continuation school concept advocated by the Fink Commission was the title. It had been established under the aegis, not of the 1905 Registration of Teachers and Schools Act, as Inch mistakenly believes,\(^8\)

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* The story of the Melbourne high schools was, until at least 1920, one of makeshift quarters. The University High School was located in an inadequate building purchased from private interests; Williamstown in an old grammar school donated to the State; Essendon was originally planned as a higher elementary school, and Coburg was only established because the local council offered a site and other advantages (P.R.O.(Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, nn. 17 February 1920).


4. Ibid., p.91.


7. Quoted in Reid, op.cit., p.75.

but of the 1901 Education Amending Act - which resulted from the findings of the Fink Commission. We have seen what that commission meant when it called for continuation schools - allowing students to complete their State school education, and providing a solid groundwork for the pursuit of higher studies in technical schools - and the 1901 Act stated that "in the interpretation of the term 'State school' there...shall be inserted the words 'such as continuation school'...", thus legalizing government involvement. The 1905 Act, to all intents and purposes, simply legalized what was, in reality, an abuse of the implicit meaning of the 1901 Act, for when the Melbourne Continuation School opened in 1905, its ostensible purpose was the training of teachers - a function which had not even been considered by the Fink Commission and the subsequent Act. In the Education gazette and teachers' aid in December, 1904, Regulation number XXV, entitled "Continuation school for the training of junior teachers", stated:

1. In accordance with the provisions of Section 2 of Act no.1777 //The 1901 Education Amending Act// it shall be lawful for the Minister of Public Instruction to establish continuation schools for the instruction and training of candidates for the position of teacher and pupil teacher.10

The continuation school was opened in early 1905 in accordance with this regulation, and the Act of the same year made the action legal. Only the least astute of observers would be likely to equate teacher training with groundwork for higher technical studies. Clearly, the Act had been manipulated, and the responsibility for this must fall, more than to any other single person, upon the shoulders of Frank Tate. He was utilizing Bent's grant, and

10. Vol.v, no.6, 20 December 1904, p.82.
undoubtedly with his blessing, to establish a school that provided an education far more general than Fink and his compatriots envisaged. As Inch\textsuperscript{11} comments, this school was the thin edge of the wedge, by means of which Tate hoped to increase the State's role in secondary education.

So far, the writer has been careful to avoid the mention of the term "secondary education" in the context of State involvement. Rather, he has used the term "post-primary", for it has already been noted that the whole question of what kind of education the government schools were to provide was a very contentious one in the first decade of this century. The need for financial stringency and the pressure imposed upon the educational legislators in Victoria by such groups as the proprietors of the private schools meant that the climate was not suitable for members of the Education Department to begin talking about providing secondary education. Indeed, as Inch\textsuperscript{12} tells us, Tate carefully avoided using the term himself on at least one public occasion. However, if he did not use it, he was certainly thinking along its lines, and the evidence to suggest this is revealed in his move to provide not only for junior teachers in the continuation school, but for scholarship holders as well. Once again, the recommendations of the Fink Commission were interpreted very liberally. On the question of scholarships, the Final report noted that

Ample provision should also be made for securing the enrolment of bright, clever children, who are likely to benefit most from the higher instruction, by adopting a system of scholarships tenable for the three years' course at a continuation school. The scholarship scheme should also be made applicable to the continuation schools, and should entitle students

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.29.
who have completed their studies at such schools to a full course of instruction at the State technical schools.\textsuperscript{13}

The government had offered scholarships to secondary schools since the 1890s, and when the continuation school opened, 25 of the 105 scholarships offered were specifically allocated to that institution.\textsuperscript{14} However, a different purpose to that envisaged by the commission was intended for them. Regulation XXV, which was concerned with the scholarships, indicated that

No scholarship shall be awarded to any candidate who does not produce satisfactory evidence from an inspector of schools that he displays marked aptitude for the work of teaching.\textsuperscript{15} /My emphasis/.

So the technical schools were to miss out on many of the scholarship holders, as indeed they did. This was the case until and after the Education Act of 1910 and, as shall be discussed further in chapter seven, the establishment of the junior technical schools in 1912 was an indication of the high schools' failure to provide sufficient students for the technical institutions.

In making an excuse for the inclusion of scholarship holders in the continuation school, the secretary of the Education Department wrote in 1906 that "it is reasonable to expect that a State which provides scholarships will also furnish the means for an efficient training",\textsuperscript{16} and in a tone which exuded benevolence on the part of

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 1907, vol.2, no.11 (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the year 1905-6), p.20.
\item Education gazette and teachers' aid, vol.v, no.6, 20 December 1904, p.82.
\end{enumerate}
the department towards the independent schools, and which would make
one think that the State had the legal right to provide a general
secondary education to youths, he added that "the Continuation School
does not desire a monopoly in this respect, and parents are at
liberty to select an approved secondary school other than the
Continuation School for the education of their boys and girls". 17 The
Minister of Public Instruction, A.O. Sachse, was questioned about
this function of the school in the Legislative Council, and his reply
was not very convincing. J. Balfour commented that the acceptance
of scholarship holders indicated an extension of the function of the
school, as scholarship holders had previously attended the independent
secondary schools. To this, Sachse replied:

They can still do if they like.
The Hon. J. Balfour asked if there were any induc-
ments held out to the winners of scholarships to go
to the continuation schools?
The Hon. A.O. Sachse. — Not the least inducment
is held out.
The Hon. J. Balfour asked if the same fees were
paid at the continuation schools?
The Hon. A.O. Sachse. — No. A little less. 18

Clearly, the continuation school was providing for scholarship holders,
and was trying to attract those who might otherwise go to other
schools. That it was successful in this venture was due to the fact
that, while the scholarship candidates were supposed to display
"marked aptitude" for the work of teaching, there was nothing in the
regulation to say that they had to undertake a junior teaching course.

Speaking in Parliament in 1907, Sachse said that the continuation
schools

...were used for training teachers for the
Department's own service, and also to give an
opportunity to the winners of State school
scholarships of attending them and completing

17. Ibid., pp.20-21.
their education there. It was his desire that wherever possible these scholarship winners would become teachers.\textsuperscript{19}

But many never did. Some, like George S. Browne, moved on to university to train as professional educators, but others, such as Victor Trood of Sale, undertook other careers. He became a dentist, and practised in his home town for many years. The school was, in fact, providing that general culture which Tate had disclaimed just three years earlier (see above page 15), and this fact was openly stated in the minister's report in 1905 when it noted:

\begin{quote}
While ample provision has been made for the training of teachers, scholarship holders have not been overlooked, but have been allowed to avail themselves of the valuable training which the school affords. Apart from the winners of government scholarships, no students have been admitted for general culture.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

It would seem from the evidence available that the government and the Education Department generally attempted to underplay the scholarship function of the continuation school, fearing attacks from the independent school interests if it became too obvious. As Lach\textsuperscript{21} points out, the emphasis on the function of the school as a junior training college obscured the significance of the step taken. The Melbourne Continuation School was, in fact if not in name, a secondary school. Even those ostensibly entering the school to undertake the junior teaching courses were not necessarily required to exhibit suitability for training in that profession. No compulsion was applied. As the regulations for admission to the school stated:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Parl. deb. (Vic.),} 1907, vol.117, p.1496.
\item \textit{P.P. (Vic.),} 1907, vol.2, no.11 (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the year 1905-6), p.23.
\end{enumerate}
Students desiring to enter the Continuation School may be required to present themselves at a competitive examination similar to, or the same as, that for scholarships, but which may also include some practical test of the candidate's aptitude for teaching and general suitability for the work of a teacher.  

There is nothing to say that the students had to be subjected to such scrutiny, and the laxity of the regulation, together with a protest from the independent school interests, led the department to issue a further statement on the subject later in the same year:

Every care should be taken to observe the spirit of Regulation XXV, 2, c, which is as follows:

Pupils must produce a certificate from the head teacher of a State school, or other approved school, that they exhibit a special aptitude and general suitability for the work of a teacher.

However, even if they were required to produce such a certificate, applicants did not have to agree to undertake a pupil-teacher course. The regulations seem to have been designed to facilitate the movement of students between the junior teacher and the secondary course and, effectively, they rendered possible a cheap secondary education for many. In 1909, the Bendigo Advertiser complained:

/They continuation schools/ are still on their trial. It is averred that either through the laxity of the department or the manipulation of parents, pupils who do not come under the regulations are admitted to them. At any rate, a large number do not ultimately continue as teachers, and the State, after training and placing them, loses all its labor. Would it not be businesslike, after the country has spent so much money over them, if the department demanded some guarantee that for some years at least they should serve the public?

Few, it seems, were deceived by the department's protestations that

23. *Ibid.*, vol. vi, no. 6, 20 December 1905, p. 82.
24. 18 June 1909.
the school was for teacher training and scholarship holders only. Soon after it opened in 1905, the principal, Joseph Hocking, recorded that "already parents are making persistent efforts to enrol their sons and daughters with a view to fitting them for various callings, and their claims could scarcely be denied".25 Scarcely, indeed, considering that no less a person than Thomas Bent, the Premier, had commented in that same year that the continuation school "was really a State high school which would give the children of poor parents all the benefits that they would now have to pay from £80 to £100 a year for in private schools".26 Worsnop27 also adds that Bent's much publicized view that the State should extend its field to provide educational opportunity at all levels for the intellectually able was presumably common knowledge at this time, and it would have certainly influenced people's impressions of the functions of the continuation school. The independent school interests were under absolutely no illusion. In his thesis, Rule28 discusses at length the various deputations made to the minister and director by those interests between 1905 and 1910, and Tate himself, in lamenting the large number of children receiving no education beyond the State school level, noted, somewhat melodramatically, their concern when he commented that the

...number of Victorian boys and girls, out of a population of 1,237,998, who go beyond the primary school stage is not more than 5,000 and...at the time of writing, the continuation schools for the training of teachers in Victoria are being closely watched by the Association of private secondary teachers for fear that a boy or girl should manage to get a cheap secondary education under

27. Ibid., p.113.
the cloak of becoming a teacher.  

The Association of Proprietors of Private Secondary Schools publicly voiced its opinion in 1909 on the eve of the introduction of a Bill designed to further extend the State post-primary system. In an open letter signed by its chairman, S.B. Vial, and honorary secretary, Ada Gresham, the association stated that "State-controlled schools have developed far beyond their original functions and are now taking up work relating to purely secondary or advanced education. This has been done without the issues at stake ever having been put clearly before the public at large".*

As the years progressed, the facade crumbled even further. After a very short time, the two functions of the school were not kept separate. Inch tells us that, because many of the young teachers would later want university qualifications in order to move into the higher echelons of the teaching service, and because the prescriptions for the junior teacher examinations and university-run Junior and Senior Public Examinations were virtually equivalent, the staff of the school (which Tate had publicly described in 1905 as "as strong academically as, and...certainly stronger professionally than, that of any other secondary school in Victoria") found it advantageous to allow scholarship holders to study common subjects "side by side

* Rule has analysed the reasons for the failure of the independent schools to have any real impact upon the situation. They failed, he concluded, for three reasons: first, some were beguiled by Tate's masterly language; secondly, others were not really aware of the magnitude of the threat and, thirdly, their preoccupation "was not unity but divisiveness, not amity but enmity, not co-operation but competition". (The origins of State secondary education in Victoria, M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1961, pp.103, 106, 117).

29. Preliminary report of the director of education upon observations made during an official visit to Europe and America, Melbourne, 1908, p.34.


31. Quoted in Inch, ibid., p.82.
with the more zealous and capable of the teacher students" - to use Hocking's words. By 1909, this practice was completely rationalized when the course of study at the continuation school was brought into line with the requirements of the Junior Public Examination. By 1910, sixty-two Senior Public Examination honours and fourteen scholarships and exhibitions to university colleges had been gained by pupils - and all from a school ostensibly designed to train junior teachers, a school whose secondary function had not even been legalized by act of parliament.

The Melbourne Continuation School was renamed - and properly so - as the Melbourne High School as a result of the passing of the Education Act of 1910. It served as the model for the other State secondary schools that were established after it and, by 1914, as Reid comments, the scholastic tradition, which it adopted from the very beginning, was firmly established in Victoria's high schools. When visiting Victoria in 1905, the Sydney educationist, Percival R. Cole, observed the continuation school in action and appraised it very accurately in recognizing that pupils "are not bound to enter the service of the Victorian Educational Department, nor (should they wish to do so) are they guaranteed an appointment...such as it is, it is less an addition than a new foundation for the Victorian Educational System that is to be".

The history of this school is of direct relevance to that of the agricultural high schools, for the latter possessed, in contradiction to their original conception, a continuation sector which was based upon the Melbourne model, and which had the same surreptitious

32. Ibid., p.53.
aim of providing a general secondary education to those who desired it. In fact, the continuation sectors of these schools were seen by Sachse, Tate and others as representing the institutions' primary function: the agricultural sectors were additional provisions. Why, then, were they called agricultural high schools, and why was the country so favoured with secondary schools at the expense of the city? To these questions we must now turn.
CHAPTER FOUR: WHY AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS?

It is said that 'a rose by any other name would smell as sweet', but sometimes we find that a certain name commends to us a thing which would not be commendable to us under another name. It is possible that if they had not been called agricultural high schools this house would not have provided for them.

Maurice Blackburn, MLA, speaking in Parliament in 1916.

After the establishment of the Melbourne Continuation School in 1905, no other State post-primary school was opened in that city until the takeover of the University High School from independent interests in 1912. In the ensuing period, however, two continuation schools - at Ballarat and Bendigo - and eight agricultural high schools were established.** Why this emphasis?

To fully comprehend the reasons, we need to refer once again to the recommendations of the Fink Commission and the context in which they were made. From the information provided in chapter one, we already know three things: first, the Commission made special reference to the need for the inclusion of the study of agriculture in the syllabi of rural schools to encourage agricultural industry and, it was hoped, assist the economy; secondly, the rural interests held considerable power in Parliament and were undoubtedly encouraged by the world trend against industrialism and urbanism; and, thirdly, the independent school interests, strongest in the city, also wielded considerable lobbying power and were opposed to any extension of government control in education that would threaten their interests.


** This figure does not include the agricultural high school at Mildura, which was part of a special plan for agricultural training included in the government's financial grant to the Chaffey brothers in the 1880s, and which, as a result, will not be considered in this thesis.
All three considerations pointed to the fact that, if post-primary schools were going to be established, they were likely to be located in the country, and have an agricultural bias.

This was the situation that Tate inherited. He had been able to get his State secondary school system off the ground with the establishment of the Melbourne Continuation School. He could argue that it fulfilled a need—that of supplying better qualified junior teachers—for which the independent schools did not cater, and, therefore, that it was not competing directly with them. However, he would have been under considerable difficulty to justify the establishment of any more of these schools in the metropolitan area. Consequently, he adopted the line of least resistance. As a result of the considerations of the Pink Commission, the political climate of the day demanded a rural emphasis. The Irvine Government had, in 1902, pledged itself to concentrate upon the assisting of primary industries. As well, on succeeding Irvine, Thomas Bent introduced a policy of closer settlement in order to get more people on to the land, but the farmers' lack of knowledge, as well as the general unsuitability of the climate and the land (much of it could not be intensively cultivated without irrigation), led to many failures. This reinforced the opinion of many, as Worsnop¹ points out, that education in agricultural techniques was necessary. Tate especially cultivated this idea, he says, in trying to break down opposition to the further provision of education by pointing out the value of such education in national development. If he could not establish secondary schools in the city, then the country would do, and the city could be catered for at a more propitious time. Tate's comments bear this thesis out. In 1908, he was advocating that Victoria's

country children needed secondary education before the city ones.

By 1916, however, the Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, Martin Hansen, was writing that one of "the most urgent problems in secondary education in Victoria at present is the provision of sufficient high schools in the metropolis and suburbs". In a pamphlet published in 1920, Tate was openly contradictory in his statements on this issue, possibly because, while he had to still pay lip service to the considerations of his political masters, he could not hide his frustration over the continued lack of further educational provisions for the city children. When considering the large numbers of urban children still not receiving secondary education of any kind, he said in the first instance that "it was a wise policy to provide first for the country districts". However, only four pages later, he lamented:

It is surely not evidence of wisdom on our part that in our metropolitan area alone, there are upwards of 30,000 boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years of age who are not to be found on the rolls of any educational establishment...Apparently, in this great district, elementary education alone is thought to be ample for the needs of those who depend upon State education...Could there be better evidence of lack of educational ideal?

The ideal had to play second fiddle to the possible even after 1920 because of the nature of the political situation. Worsnop has described Tate's position very clearly:

As Director, Tate was in large measure responsible for the establishment of new schools, but he was first of all an administrator who had to sublimate his educational policy to the general policy of his political masters. These were the men to whom it was vital that local demands were satisfied, and


undoubtedly these demands included the provision of State secondary education...Allied to this was the predominance of country members and the Country Party in governments already committed to rural development, so that any other sort of spread of educational provision was highly unlikely.\(^5\)

It has already been noted in chapter two that Tate quite probably did come to the opinion that the addition of a vocational aspect to a secondary course was a wise move in an increasingly competitive world. We do, after all, find him emphasizing this aspect in most of his writings after 1900, including those made late in his life. As a corollary to this, there seems to be little room for doubting the fact that he was highly interested in agriculture as a subject in the rural child's curriculum. He continually defended the teaching of agriculture in secondary schools, even after the failure of the full agricultural course in the agricultural high schools. When he called a halt to the establishment of any more of those schools in 1912, he nevertheless indicated that agriculture should be retained and extended "as an integral part of our school course. In the high schools and higher elementary schools now being established, there should be room for agriculture as a subject; and, although the expensive farm equipment of the agricultural high school need not be forthcoming, there should be an area of three acres or more devoted to experimental purposes".\(^6\)

At the same time, to emphasize the importance that he placed upon agriculture, he also commented that "in order that our future teachers may be trained to carry on agricultural teaching in the elementary schools, it has been decided that, for the future, those candidate teachers who are enrolled in agricultural high schools


must take agriculture as one of the subjects of their course". In 1916, he extended this when the regulations of the new Intermediate Examination required that all male candidates going to school in country areas had to study agriculture as one of their subjects and, even as late as 1924, Tate published a booklet called Some lessons from rural Denmark, in which he attempted to apply - faultily, as Badcock points out - the closely settled agricultural situation in Denmark to the Victorian scene.

However, to take this interest one step further and say that Frank Tate desired to provide country students with a narrowly based agricultural course, and to sacrifice the educational interests of the bulk of the State's youth - in the cities - at the same time is to completely ignore the liberal ideas that he had enunciated only a few years earlier. In his thesis, Badcock does express this belief, stating that it was based upon Tate's opinion - as he sees it - that Victoria's prosperity was dependent upon the primary industry of the State. As a result, he says, the greatest crime in Tate's opinion was that ninety-eight per cent of the country's children did not go beyond primary level. This seemed to him more tragic than the fact that there were thousands of children in Melbourne who were not going to school.

On the face of it, Badcock certainly has plenty of evidence to support his contention. In his 1904 report, Tate concentrated upon the importance of the teaching of agriculture in the schools. He said on that occasion that "during the past three years the Education

7. Ibid., p.48.


Department has by its introduction of nature study as an important part of the curriculum, emphasized the often expressed opinion that, in a country which depends for its prosperity upon the producing interests, its children should be at early age trained to observe and appreciate the facts of Nature and the laws of her operations. However, such utterances need to be balanced against the evidence in Tate's writings which suggests that he saw the need for equal educational opportunity for all, and against the industrial situation of the time. On the first issue mentioned, Tate often bemoaned the fact that many city children did not go to secondary school. In 1909, he "spoke in condemnatory terms of the action of young Victorian boys being allowed to stand about street corners", and in 1921, he argued that "a strong case could be made out in favour of giving the children of the metropolitan area equal opportunities for higher education with those of country and provincial districts". On the other issue, it has already been noted that one of the main reasons for the move towards agriculture in the early 1900s was the feeling that the Victorian economy was over-dependent upon the secondary sector of industry. Victoria was the most industrialized State in the nation, and, according to Rivkah Mathews, a major feature of late nineteenth century Victorian politics had been the struggle to attain a protective tariff for a growing secondary industry. The natural movement of the time was, then, definitely one away from the

rural industries. Mathews'\textsuperscript{14} puts the education question in its proper context when she contends that the responsibility for launching the State secondary system was undertaken at a time when there were strong doubts that Australia would continue to play the dual role of market and garden that she had as a British colony. It is true that Victoria's economy, like that of the rest of the country, was still based firmly upon primary industry, but expansion in secondary industry was rapid and, by 1906, almost two-thirds of the State's population was classed as urban, with forty per cent of it based in Melbourne (see Appendix 2). The structure of the workforce reflected this situation as well. In 1907, only about thirty-five per cent of the workforce was involved in agriculture and, by 1920, it had declined relatively in proportion to the total workforce, with secondary industry making the greatest gains at its expense (see Appendix 3). While this is not to say that faith in the primary industries was deteriorating (Mathews'\textsuperscript{15} points out that the belief that Australia's future lay predominantly in the growth of primary industry and the development of the land was still pervasive up until the late 1920s), it does suggest that evidence of the trend away from that sector was available, and if we argue, as Reid\textsuperscript{16} does, that Tate was an astute judge of the situation, then it seems plausible that he must have been aware of this trend. This is the context that Badcock ignores. Politicians such as Fink and those with an interest in rural pursuits could sweep the evidence of industrialization in Victoria under the carpet (it has already been noted in chapter one that the Fink Commission did not study the figures for

15. Ibid., p.22.
16. See above, chapter two, p.16.
secondary industry) - political and passionate thinking often over-
ride common sense - but a detached administrator such as Tate had no
need to, and with the aim of a society of urbanized and civilized
gentlemen in mind, one would suppose that he kept a close eye upon the
urban situation. While this is not to say that Tate could see clearly
trends that many others could or would not, it is reasonable to assume
that he was aware that secondary industry was developing at such a
rate that it could not be dismissed simply as a passing phase and,
even if only in terms of its future demand as far as workforce was
concerned, it could not be ignored. Tate noted such in his writings,
especially when he stated in 1904 that education had become an
"industrial question".17 With the growing industrial might of Germany
being the concern throughout the Empire at that time, he surely could
not have been referring to primary industry.

So while Tate saw the need for further cultural and vocational
education in the rural areas, it is likely that he saw a concomitant
need for it in the urban areas as well. In 1920, he expressed this
view when he wrote:

In Australia it is wise to plan an education for
all which embraces an adequate training for all
three functions of life - work, leisure and
citizenship. Each reacts on the other two - a
purely vocational education is too narrow.
I know of no better way to minimize the class-
consciousness which is at present so great a
hindrance to our social and industrial progress
than to extend, improve, and popularize our
State system of education.18

He did not really believe that country children should come first or
last. Rather, to use Worsnop's19 words, since most of the members

still occupying the parliamentary benches at that time were from rural areas, and since the idea of closer settlement and intensified agriculture was fairly widely accepted as the current philosophy, it would seem more appropriate to see Tate as the instrument through which these policies took effect, rather than as the initiator of them.*

Given this situation, the rural emphasis did not facilitate the acceptance of Tate's policy of agricultural high schools, as Reid believes. Rather, it determined it. It has already been noted that, in addition to the limitations imposed by the political mood of the time, Tate was also limited by financial stringency. To use Murray-Smith's words, he was frustrated in his efforts to establish a fuller secondary system by the advance of the "Ice Age of Government economy", and while Bent's victory in 1906 strengthened his hand, and provided the finance for the establishment of the Melbourne Continuation School, it is obvious that the cash flow dried up considerably after that event. Proof of the severity of the financial shortage was provided in 1913 when, in response to a

*The growth of the rural lobby in the Victorian Parliament has been described by several observers of the scene. Reid (Teachers and bureaucracy..., Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1974, pp.133-6) notes that the Country Party emerged in Victorian politics in 1907 and caused a re-organization of the Bent Ministry, including the replacement of Otto Sachse as Minister of Public Instruction by John Bowser, member for the rural electorate of Wangaratta.

The influence of the party was, in Worsnop's words (Educational policies, pp.63-4), a force that no government could ignore, and it influenced all policy-making until long after 1914. Even as late as 1920, Tate was maintaining that Victoria's rural education was the best in the world, in response, according to Reid (op.cit., p.482), to the Lawson Government's dependence for survival upon the support of the parliamentary members of the Farmers' Union.


letter from W.M. Gamble and Captain Halkyard of Hawkesburn State School, requesting the establishment of a high school in the southern suburbs of Melbourne, acting Chief Inspector Alfred Fussell wrote that "the Melbourne High School provides such facilities for a high school as must suffice for the present. Having regard also to the restricted amount of funds at the disposal of the Education Department, it is unlikely that the Minister would be prepared to consider the establishment of another high school within the metropolitan area". But that the one high school did not provide sufficient places to meet the demand was evidenced by the school's reply to an applicant in 1911: "With reference to the application for your enrolment as a pupil of the Melbourne High School...it will probably be necessary, owing to the large number of applications, to make a selection from among the candidates offering". Even as late as 1920, Tate was being foiled in his attempts to establish metropolitan high schools. In a memorandum to the minister regarding a letter in the Argus on the tenth of February that year, emphasizing the need for more high schools in the city, he wrote that "I think it would be well to consider the establishment of a large high school on a block of Government land at Elwood. If we can obtain the authority for going ahead with such a scheme it might be ready by the opening of the new school year in February next". Sadly for Tate, the Elwood High School did not open at the beginning of the 1921 school year as he desired. In fact, it was not until the mid-1950s, more than thirty years after its need was established, that the Elwood school was opened, and even then, it was one of the very few

22. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, no.1913/1775, 2 October 1913.
23. Ibid., trypo 11/2/9, no.1911/13869, 12 October 1911.
24. Ibid., nn., 17 February 1920.
metropolitan high schools to be established south of the Yarra river before the educationally booming years of the sixties. Tate revealed his frustration — and his aim — in 1920 when he commented to the minister that another letter in the Argus on the same topic

...is written under the impression that the site of high schools in the metropolitan area has been fixed after a consideration of the whole of the needs of the metropolis. As a matter of fact the establishment of metropolitan high schools has been almost entirely fortuitous...

The only way to deal with the present unsatisfactory condition of State secondary education in the metropolitan area is to establish more high schools.25

Thus we can see that Tate's struggle to establish a fully-fledged State secondary system was an enormous one, and a task in which he did not fully succeed. The political and financial barriers were to prove almost insurmountable during his term as director, but he did what he could, and his first real opportunity came in the country areas shortly after the Melbourne school was opened in 1905. While Bent could not provide more funds for metropolitan schools, it seems that the rural lobby facilitated the establishment of a financial grant to provide for agriculturally biased high schools in the country districts. The Year book of agriculture for 1905 revealed that such schools had been under consideration, and stated that

...the proposal to establish agricultural high schools has been advanced another stage by the decision of the Government to devote the sum of £3000 for this purpose during the current year. This sum is made available under the following conditions:—

a) At least one-half of the cost of the necessary buildings and equipment shall be contributed by local subscriptions.

b) An area of land of not less than 20 acres situated in a convenient position to the high school shall be provided and vested in the Minister of Public Instruction.26

25. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, nn., 17 February 1920.

26. Melbourne, 1905, p.27.
This was a very conservative grant, applying as it did to the whole State, at a time when the cost of a fully equipped, single school building was about three thousand pounds.* But however small, it nevertheless provided Tate with his cue, and he proceeded to advertise this offer in the country areas.

The grant was obviously meant to provide for vocationally biased schools, and equally obviously came as a result of the rural influence in Parliament. However, the resultant agricultural high schools, like the Melbourne Continuation school before them, bore little resemblance to the image in the minds of those who first envisaged them. In discussing these schools, Rivkah Mathews argues that they embodied Tate's belief in an education that was an enlightened combination of broad humanistic studies and technical instruction. Indeed, she argues, "the curriculum he proposed for the new agricultural high schools to be established in 1908 gave a third of the time to cultural subjects, a third to mathematics and science, and a third to manual training."**

Her description of the agricultural course provided in these schools is accurate, but her argument is severely weakened by her mistaken belief that that course was the only one offered in them.*** She is completely unaware of the fact that they also offered a

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* Departmental records indicate that the average cost of the buildings provided for the agricultural high schools was about three to four thousand pounds each.

** Mathews is wrong about the date here. The first agricultural high schools were planned to be and were opened at Sale and Warrnambool in 1907.

*** Proof of this is provided by her statement that, until 1910, teacher training "had been conducted under the aegis of the Melbourne Continuation School only". (Conflicting demands, p.44). Evidence to prove that the continuation sectors of the agricultural high schools also fulfilled this function from their outset is provided liberally in this thesis.

continuation course, exactly the same as the one provided at the Melbourne Continuation School, complete with scholarship holders and all. Thus the agricultural high schools of Victoria do not fit as neatly into Mathews' dichotomy of general/vocational education as she would believe. Their continuation sectors, upon which most emphasis was placed by the department, made them secondary schools in the true sense of the word, providing a general, distinctly non-vocational education to the children of parents who could not afford to send them to the independent schools.

That the minister and the department saw these schools as being primarily continuation rather than agricultural schools was evidenced by several statements. In 1907, for example, Sachse, the minister at the time, when pressed in Parliament to describe the agricultural high schools, said that they "were continuation schools. The Act empowered the Minister to establish continuation schools. Those in which agriculture was taught were continuation schools, but they were called agricultural high schools. They were, therefore, the same thing...slightly different, but technically the same as continuation schools". 28 At the same time, the report of the minister recorded that "five continuation schools are now in operation, two of which have an agricultural side". 29

It seems that Tate killed two birds with one stone by adding the continuation course to the structure of the agricultural high schools. Not only did it mean that he could introduce a general culture course under the disguise of a teacher-training course, but it also meant that he could open the schools without having to fully meet the

official requirements in order to qualify for a part of the three thousand pound grant. In reply to a question from N. Bayles, MLA, on whether the provisions of the regulation had been strictly adhered to in the establishment of the agricultural high schools, the honorary Minister for the Minister of Public Instruction in the Legislative Assembly, J.A. Boyd, said that "as the schools in question are to serve the purpose of continuation schools at which junior teachers will be trained, as well as agricultural high schools, a literal compliance with the regulations referred to was not insisted on". 30 If the regulations concerning the minimum amount of money and the minimum number of fifty fee-paying agricultural students (see Appendix 4) had been closely adhered to, then it is doubtful whether some or all of the agricultural high schools would have been opened at all. Evidence of the reality of the situation, and the department's seeming lack of concern about it, was provided in February 1909 at a meeting of the Advisory Council of the Shepparton Agricultural High School, which was due to open in April of that year. Having emulated Saleby by saying that the agricultural high schools were "practically continuation schools only with a different name", 31 Inspector W. Hamilton was questioned on the number of agricultural students the school could expect to get. He replied that "if they got twenty they would do well". 32

The emphasis placed upon the schools by Tate and the department is clear. By means of freely interpreting the regulations, he had launched the first vessels of his full State system. That the agricultural high schools were not in the form that their original

32. Ibid.
promoters intended, and that the initial deviance from the regulations was likely to and did lead to more thoughts along the same lines was proven by a comment made by John Sutherland, chairman of the Shepparton Agricultural High School Advisory Council, at that same early meeting attended by Hamilton. In the presence of the latter (who is not reported as making any retort), Sutherland said that

While the conditions said that no scholar would be accepted unless he had a merit certificate, he thought that might be altered and not held to hard and fast. It was said there would be no girls, but a cooking stove had been provided [by the department]. He did not think the laws were like those of The Medes and Persians - unalterable.33

Quite clearly, Sutherland was a man after Tate’s own heart.

The agricultural high schools, the first two of which opened at Sale and Warrnambool in 1907, were providing a course of secondary education for boys and girls akin to that provided by the independent schools, and, as with the Melbourne Continuation School, many people were not deceived by their title. Mr. Hayles, who seems to have been a persistent questioner on this topic, also asked Boyd whether or not the schools were engaged in giving secondary education. Boyd replied that Sachse had not given him any details, and said that it was very evident that the question "is a poser that they [the department] cannot answer".34 When finally pressed for a direct answer, Sachse said that "the pupils are either taking the agricultural course or the teaching course",35 - which cleverly sidestepped the issue.

It did not take long for the secondary sectors of these schools to have an effect upon the fortunes of their independent competitors.

33. Shepparton news, 19 February 1909.
35. Ibid., p.3388.
Those in Ballarat, such as the Ballarat and St. Patrick's Colleges, being established like their counterparts in Bendigo in a large provincial city, and having a substantial urban and regional population to draw upon, were able to weather the impact of the State school. However, in general, those in the smaller towns did not fare as well. In Sale, the local Girls' High School announced only a year after the opening of the agricultural high school that "it is with deep regret that, owing to the existence of the Continuation School in Sale, we are compelled to close our establishment". The Gippsland College, also situated in Sale, soon followed suit. In Shepparton, the effect of the State school was even more immediate. Roy Clydesdale, the first head prefect of the Shepparton Agricultural High School, moved to it from a private school which ceased to function as soon as it opened in 1909. This school may have been the Church of England Grammar School, which opened in 1904 and closed in 1909.

The story of the Wangaratta Grammar School, and the fight put up by its headmaster/proprietor, J.W. Thomson, provides perhaps the best illustration of the insidious effect that the agricultural high schools had upon the independent schools. When the Wangaratta Agricultural High School opened, also in 1909, the Grammar School occupied a "spacious new college" that had been completed in 1907. If Thomson was not aware of the department's real intentions vis-à-vis the agricultural high school when he opened his new school building,

36. Gippsland mercury, 10 April 1908.
38. Reported in interview given to the writer, Mooroopna, 26 February 1976.
39. Recorded in Raymond West: Those were the days - a story of Shepparton, Victoria, Shepparton, 1962, p.213.
40. Wangaratta chronicle, 2 August 1908.
he was certainly under no illusions by the time of Speech Night in December, 1908. In indicating that he would not surrender meekly to the encroachment of the State into the area of secondary education, he said at that function:

How is the Grammar School going to get on when the Agricultural High School with its so-called Continuation classes is opened? In other towns under the same conditions, the private schools have been closed. I find it very hard to say what effect the new school will have on us in the future, but if it is going to do us harm, we are not going to give in without a fight.  

At the same gathering a year later, perhaps with a tinge of bitterness and despair, Thomson indirectly indicated what effect the State school was having when he commented that "the State is now entering boldly into the realm of secondary education pure and simple, although they still call their Secondary School Agricultural, and pretend that all other pupils are being trained for teachers".  

The die was obviously cast, and only half a year later, the Wangaratta Chronicle recorded that Thomson would probably be on the staff of the agricultural high school in a temporary position from the start of the coming term. The grammar school would be continued under another management. However, it is doubtful whether it did, for no speech night report was published for it in that, or any future year.

Thomson, no doubt sadly defeated, had obviously adopted the motto of "if you can't beat them, join them". He stayed at the school for a number of years and, after a period at Warrnambool, he returned to become - the supreme irony - the headmaster of the school in 1919.

Evidence of the real nature of the agricultural high schools was

41. Ibid., 19 December 1908.
42. Ibid., 18 December 1909.
43. 2 July 1910.
plain to see, and, in 1907, the *Argus* commented:

If the State, with its command of immense resources, is to be permitted, under whatever plausible scheme—either by continuation schools, agricultural high schools, or schools having some other impressive name—to compete with the private schools, there can be no doubt as to the result. Down the private schools will go...

- Of course, it is possible that the Government do not realise what the department is doing...

...how can the smaller secondary schools for boys, the grammar schools of the country towns and the metropolitan suburbs...compete with schools that evade the Secondary Teachers' Act, employing unqualified teachers, charge low fees, and, having command of the State's resources, undersell the profession while interfering in the work of the profession?

Yet this is what the Education Department threatens them with. By a subterfuge—and it can be called nothing else—the department is "running" pseudo-secondary schools under the name of agricultural schools...To the people the department commends its goods by calling them secondary education or something equal to secondary education; to the government the department defends itself by saying that its new schools are merely a technical advance on the primary schools, and so it blows hot and cold at the same time.44

Not everyone was deceived, to use Rule's45 description, by the name "continuation school", or by the statement emphasizing the training college function. If the government was not aware of what Tate and the department were doing, as the *Argus* suggested, then other members of the Parliament certainly were. Mr. Bayles' inquiring nature has already been mentioned and, in 1916, John Lemmon, M.L.A—herself a Minister of Public instruction (albeit for only thirteen days in a short-lived Labor ministry in 1913) —voiced his opinion of Tate's motives when he said:

I honestly believe there was a political element in the establishment of our agricultural high schools.

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44. 4 April 1907; 18 November 1907.

When Mr. Tate came back from his trip abroad /in 1908/ he realized that the political power of Victoria was in the hands of the country districts - it is in the hands of the country districts now to a large extent - and in order to get the necessary political support - this is my opinion, I am not necessarily giving the views of Mr. Tate - he emphasized the need of agricultural education. By that move he no doubt won a great deal of support from people who otherwise would have been opposed to secondary education being established in the State. 46

By this time however, Frank Tate had succeeded in his purpose, partial State involvement in secondary education had been legalized by the 1910 Act, and the agricultural sectors in the high schools had been recognized as being failures, dying slow but steady deaths, unmourned by the department. Tate had achieved this despite considerable opposition from the press, which seemed to take a unanimous stand against his activities.* In 1914, for example, the Age criticized the schools in a similar vein to that of the Argus, and also presented reasons for the failure of those agricultural sectors when it commented:

The Agricultural High Schools are agricultural schools in name only. True enough they teach agriculture, but they merely teach it as one of many other subjects that are held by the teaching staff in more particular esteem. Really they are secondary schools differing in no way from their kind except that they do offer a course in agriculture, but if they have an agricultural bias, as some indulgent critics contend, the bias is never obtrusive and not always perceptible. Unfortunately, however, that is not their only fault. A well grounded suspicion exists that the agricultural tuition they dispense is both inexpert and ineffective. And it leads nowhere. The student may

* Tate must have been very disappointed about this opposition. Rule comments (Origins of State secondary education, p.65) that the Age and Argus had considerable power over ministries because of the tendency of the non-Labor coalitions to splinter over issues, and Tate tried to enlist their support in his campaign to increase state involvement in secondary education.

graduate with a diploma, but he finds it valueless to him as a bridge, either to Dookie or Longerenong /Agricultural Colleges/ on the one hand or to the University on the other. As the Age indicated, it was not just the case that the agricultural courses suffered because of a lack of concern by administrators more concerned with the secondary sectors of the agricultural high schools. They also suffered because they possessed inherent weaknesses and, if Tate and the department did not impose them on purpose, they did little to rectify them when they became evident.

Those problems and the department's role are the subjects of the following chapter.

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47. 3 March 1914.
CHAPTER FIVE: RURAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE AGRICULTURAL COURSE

It is like trying to learn swimming without going into the water.

J. Cameron, MLA, speaking in Parliament in reference to the teaching of farming techniques at agricultural high schools.*

In the report written in 1908 after his return from an extensive visit to Europe and the United States, Frank Tate outlined the ostensible purpose of the agricultural high schools:

The Agricultural High Schools are not designed to turn out farmers, but to provide such an education as will enable a boy ultimately to become an educated, intelligent, practical farmer. A farmer can, through his District Agricultural High school, give his boy an advanced education that does not wean him away from his father's interests and pursuits.1

Apart from a consideration of its politically-oriented background, an analysis of the origins of the Victorian agricultural high school course presents plausible reasons for its failure. Two elements stand out in this: first, demand from rural interests outside of the Parliament for such a course was low or almost non-existent and, secondly, the emphasis upon practical work in the course was not in keeping with trends in other areas, and was too narrowly vocational to successfully provide an all-round education.

P.J. Worsnop2 states that the establishment of the agricultural high schools was largely the outcome of local efforts to secure more education in the various districts. However, he may be confusing

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1. Preliminary report of the director of education...Melbourne, 1908, p.85.
the demand from rural members in the Parliament with the demand from people in their electorates. A close examination of the situation in at least four centres which finally obtained agricultural high schools reveals that local demand was, in fact, very small. In the case of Sale, for example, the *Gippsland Mercury* noted in 1905, in reference to the three thousand pound grant offered by the government, that eight agricultural high schools were to be established, and suggested that this was Sale's golden opportunity.³ However, by July of the following year it was complaining about the local apathy towards the utilization of the grant, and it noted that "not only has nothing been locally done, but the same apathy appears to prevail all over the State".⁴ The newspaper noted that many towns had expressed interest in the offer, but that local contributions were not forthcoming. A letter from "A Parent" in 1907 complained about the lack of response to the appeal for money for the school, and pointed out that "the Government seems fully alive to the necessity of providing fuller education to bring this State into touch with the other States of the Commonwealth and New Zealand, and it is asking a very small sacrifice on the part of this town and district in carrying out the new scheme of education".⁵

But sacrifices were slow in coming forth. In Ballarat (which was transformed from a continuation school into an agricultural high school in 1910), according to the headmaster's report, "from the first, but scant encouragement has been given by the people",⁶ and the historian of the school records that "generally speaking, the

³. 29 December 1905.
⁵. Ibid., 22 February 1907.
response from the neighbouring Municipalities was disappointing; most of them claimed to be unable to contribute anything. The mayor, J.J. Brokenshire, in his efforts to raise the necessary fifteen hundred pounds required from local efforts, waited on the Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society - and received twenty-five pounds.  

In Wangaratta in 1909, a public meeting held in the Theatre Royal to discuss the establishment of the agricultural high school was adjourned because of the small attendance - only twenty-five people bothered to turn up, and this despite the fact that the creation of the school had been mooted since the announcement of the government grant in 1905.

Shepparton fared a little better. Apart from the school at Mildura, the Shepparton Agricultural High School was the only one established in an area of intensive agriculture, and the need for improved techniques was reflected in the greater interest shown in the establishment of the school. H.G. Martindale, the school's historian, notes that, in 1907, within three months of the suggestion of the establishment of the school, more than half of the amount required from local interests by the department had been raised, and a meeting of representatives from the Shepparton Agricultural Society, the shire council, the progress association, the teachers' association, the working men's club and the Australian Natives' Association had supported the establishment of a school. Further, a local business,

8. Ballarat star, 1 July 1907.
10. Ibid., 18 October 1905.
Furphy and Sons, had offered fifteen acres of land for the school farm. However, as Martindale comments, the interest generated in establishing the school can be largely placed upon the shoulders of two energetic and involved men — J. Sutherland and C. Failing. The Shepparton news commented in April of that year that "the public appeal made in our columns a week or so back has not been responded to too well yet, and if the school is to be an accomplished fact, farmers and townspeople must come forward and support it financially".

A significant point is the fact that those bodies which would be assumed likely to be interested in the establishment of such schools — the farmers' organizations — showed a distinct degree of apathy when called upon to make financial donations. Concerning the Shepparton school, the Tatura guardian commented in 1907 that "the question of establishing an agricultural high school in Shepparton did not receive much attention at the agricultural society's meeting on Saturday. The apathetic spirit displayed by members is not likely to increase the prospects of the establishment of such a desirable institution, and the result will probably lead to the refusal by many of the district societies to support the proposal".

Even when in sympathy, many, like the Tungamah Agricultural Society, were "not in a position to assist the High School", and in announcing his organization's decision not to donate any money, the president of the Numurkah Agricultural Society said that "personally, he did not know that agricultural high schools would do as much good as was contended, and as far as he could see there would be very

13. Ibid., p.6.
14. 12 April 1907.
15. Reported in Shepparton news, 23 April 1907.
16. Ibid., 14 May 1907.
few students from this district. 17

As the Tatura guardian suggested, if the agricultural bodies were not interested, then it was hardly likely that other societies would be. The Numurkah branch of the Australian Natives' Association, for example, donated one guinea to the fund, but not before one member had stated his belief that the school would mostly benefit the wealthy farmers' sons and should be practically self-supporting 18 - comments about the schools such as this man's and that of the Numurkah society president proved to be remarkably prophetic.

The apathy was obviously common to most rural areas, and this was recognized in official departmental circles when Hansen commented in 1915 that "the schools were not founded, as far as I know, in response to any strong public opinion, or as a result of local faith and enthusiasm in agricultural education." 19 There obviously was some local response after a while, and probably after considerable "stirring" by the local press. In 1912, in response to a question in the Legislative Council by H. Richardson, J.D. Brown, Attorney-General, reported the following local contributions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Amount (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colac</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leongatha</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansfield</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepparton</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warragul</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrnambool</td>
<td>600*20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Significantly, most of these totals are less than the fifteen

* Sale's donation was so low because the town donated a two thousand pound building to the school.

17. Ibid.
hundred pounds needed for half the building cost. As with the numbers of students, the department had to forego the regulations if it wanted to open the schools quickly. One wonders in how many of these cases the local agricultural society was pressured, and perhaps indirectly financed by the government, to finally 'foot' most of the bill.)

The reasons for the local apathy, especially amongst the farmers, can probably best be seen in an analysis of the origins of the agricultural course that was provided within the context of the agricultural situation in Victoria at that time. It has already been noted in chapter four that one of the main concerns of governments of the State in the first decade of this century was that of establishing a policy of closer settlement on the land. The problem in Victoria at the time, as Sachse noted in 1909, was not that the farmer had too little land but "too much in many cases. He put a fence around a large area, he scratched the surface, and only obtained the poorest return from the soil". This abundance of land adversely influenced the farmer's attitude towards the scientific study of agriculture. He was sceptical of the need for such a course. After all, he had learned by experience, and the argument that he had progressed without such training was undoubtedly advanced by many.

Despite the government's attempts, much of the land in Victoria was unsuitable for closer settlement without irrigation, and scientific methods were not needed to any great degree on extensively farmed land. We only have to go into our country areas today and look at the great amount of erosion that has been instigated by man to realize the sense of abandon that must have filled the minds of our early farmers. They had plenty of land to play with: why

undertake unnecessary education in the science and economics of farming? In discussing the causes of the dearth of agricultural students in 1914, the headmaster of Warragul Agricultural High School, J.P. McLennan, reported to the department that scepticism "is a potent factor; farmers, as a class, are sceptical of men who are classed as experts...A farmer brought his two boys to me the other day; one is to be a teacher, the other an electrical engineer. He said that if they were to be farmers they would learn as he had done - by hard, practical experience". McLennan's counterpart in Ballarat, J.H. Refshauge, also added that

The success of some of these farmers is measured in the amount of wealth accumulated...if the farmer could be convinced that...a wider education and a scientific knowledge of the principles underlying agriculture would achieve the same end...and at the same time secure happiness in work and a fuller life, because an intelligent interest in the doings of others and in the welfare of the State would be created, then would our agricultural high schools become more popular.

Tate recognized such in 1910, when, in searching for an explanation for the lack of success of the agricultural course, he commented that "in Australia, where the area for each farm is large, there is not the same pressure to improve methods of farming as in countries where every acre must be utilized to its fullest extent". Rivkah Mathews has described the situation well in pointing out that "neither squatter nor cocky yearned for an agronomist; the wool, wheat and dairy industries needed skilled labor only to a minor degree, and the problems of land utilization and conservation faced

22. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Warragul High School, no.1914/3125, 21 February 1915.
decades later were not yet recognized." 25

Seemingly ignorant of this situation in 1906, Tate and other members of the department set out to find an agricultural course that would be suited to their new schools. As has been noted in chapter one, the Fink Commission, because it did not specifically recommend agricultural high schools, did not recommend a course — although it did praise the one conducted by the Frome Road Agricultural school in Adelaide (see page 9). Tate could not look to anywhere else in Australia for good examples because, as Hansen noted in 1915, "Victoria is the only State in the Commonwealth that has made a serious attempt to solve the difficult question of agricultural education." 26 Indeed, if Tate looked at the other prominent education report of the time, the Knibbs-Turner Report from New South Wales, he would have discovered that it made no mention of agriculture at all. In that State, where the government had been involved in the sphere of post-primary education since 1883, the main recommendation with regard to the establishment of secondary schools was:

1. The immediate establishment in the metropolitan area of two thoroughly equipped State secondary schools, one for each sex, with classical, real and modern sections, following generally — but not exactly — the type of the Gymnasium, Realgymnasium, and Higher Realschule of Germany, but having in addition a paedagogic section for the education of teachers.

2. The establishment later of similar schools in the larger centres of population in the country. 27

(In his 1908 report, Tate also used an example of a German school, at

25. Ibid., p.25.
Lichtenhof, when discussing agricultural courses. However, in comparison with the Victorian course, this school's course placed a much greater emphasis upon academic subjects, including foreign languages (see Appendix 5). As we shall see, the fact that the Victorian course was far more biased towards the practical side meant that the students undertaking it were severely disadvantaged in their chances of obtaining further education.)

It is also significant that, in reports on trends in education overseas, the New South Welsh commissioners made no mention of agricultural education in Scotland or Denmark. In supporting his course, Tate constantly referred to the praise made of it by the visiting Scottish commissioners on education in 1910, and to the value and importance of agricultural education in Denmark, a country as unlike Australia in geography and economics as any in the world. He was surprised to discover, upon visiting Denmark in the 1920s, that agricultural education in that country was not as prevalent as he had thought, and Scotland has never been renowned as a leader in scientific farming techniques.

From this evidence, it seems apparent that Tate put little real thought into the agricultural course that was provided. Rather, it is more plausible that, like the policy of building schools in the country in the first place, the course was imposed upon him by rural political interests, and he had to fill the role of front-man. The Department of Agriculture was employed to make recommendations on the topic (and, as shall be seen, this was one of the very few connections that the Department of Agriculture had with the

agricultural high schools) and Tate's counterpart in that department, Dr. Thomas Cherry, published a lengthy article on the schools in the *Year book of agriculture for 1905*. In it he also used the example of Denmark (perhaps this is where Tate obtained it from), but only as an example of the need to further the general education of the farmer if the "northern races" were to progress. According to Cherry, the opinion in England and the United States was that the farmer's educational solution was "to be found in a combination of literary work, scientific study, and practical farming",\(^{30}\) and he quoted James Mortimer, headmaster of the Grammar School and County School of Agriculture at Ashburton in Devon as saying in 1906 that:

> The main branches of the farmer's education... should be—
> 1. Natural Science as bearing upon agriculture.
> 3. Manual Work such as will enable him to acquire strength and skill in all operations required on the farm; and
> 4. Elevation of his higher nature, to cultivate in him a taste for what is great and good and beautiful in art, history, and in literature.\(^{31}\)

On the basis of this description, Cherry recommended a possible course, consisting of physics, chemistry, mathematics, English, physiology, geology, drawing and bookkeeping in the first year (with domestic economy and hygiene if girls were to be included - which they were not in the original conception of the schools),\(^*\) and English, botany, zoology, meteorology and agriculture in the second. The practical studies, he stipulated, would form at least one-third of the total work of the course.\(^{32}\)

\(^*\) See above, p.44.


31. Ibid., p.216.

32. Ibid., p.220.
When finally prescribed, the course at the agricultural high schools was, with a few minor exceptions, modelled along these lines. One-third of the week was devoted to "culture" subjects, one-third to science subjects with relation to agriculture, and one-third to practical work on the school farm (see Appendix 6). That Cherry - and his department in all probability - was guided by the rural political influence in making these recommendations is suggested by his concluding comment. In general, he said, the school would be conducted "along the same lines as the Continuation school in Melbourne, but with all the subjects tending in the direction of agriculture". 33 This was in contrast to the emphasis he made in Bendigo in 1907. In the Legislative Council debate on the establishment of the agricultural high schools, R.S.H. Abbott commented that the Director of Agriculture, when visiting that city to promote the establishment of an agricultural high school there, stressed the importance in the curriculum, not of agriculture, but of Greek, Latin and French. 34 These subjects were required for further agricultural studies at the university, but were not prescribed in the course recommended by Cherry himself.

As has been noted, Tate had other ideas anyway, and when the first schools opened they had two separate and distinct courses - the continuation one and the agricultural one - and the subjects of the former had no connection with agriculture whatsoever.

If the rural political interests did guide these considerations, then it would explain the bias towards practical work rather than towards cultural subjects which, as has been noted, was in contrast to practices in other places, and seemingly in contrast to Tate's

33. Ibid., p.220.
educational beliefs as well.*

The role of the Department of Agriculture was not along the lines originally envisaged. Joint education and agriculture departmental involvement was planned but, in reality, the latter had little or no say. There was, in fact, as the Shepparton News commented, "no correlation between the agricultural high schools and the Department of Agriculture". Its role was reduced to that of providing expert speakers and testing stock and, after Cherry's article, only two more brief mentions were made of the schools in the department's Journal of Agriculture - a reprinting of the regulations governing agricultural high schools and a brief article by school inspector J.H. Betheras on curriculum.

In fact, the whole system of agricultural education in Victoria at this time was fragmented and sectional. In 1914, the Age quoted F.W. Bagelthorpe, Commissioner of Public Works, as saying in Horsham that "there are...about half a dozen agencies in Victoria, such as the high schools and the agricultural colleges...where degrees in agriculture are conferred, but none of them is doing as effective work as might be expected. It will be impossible to get the desired

* Given the contradiction on the part of Cherry, and Tate's need to say one thing whilst doing another, it may be informative to look at the role of the Minister of Agriculture, George Swinburne, in this context. Bessant attributes to him the initiative for the establishment of the first agricultural high schools, and says that he shared with Tate a strong belief that the destiny of the country depended upon the rural areas. However, Tate's faith has been questioned, and Swinburne's background and position cast some doubt upon his as well. He was, after all, a city man, a member of the Bent Reform Ministry. Like Bent, he may well have found it necessary to cater for the whims of the rural lobby. Swinburne's claim to fame is not the establishment of the agricultural high schools as much as the creation of a technical college in his eastern suburban electorate in 1909 - an institution that subsequently bore his name (Bessant, Education and politics..., Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, 1971, p.154.)

35. 29 December 1913.
results unless they are linked up one with the other, so that a boy could advance from the State school to the University". The leader of the newspaper went on to note that

The chief trouble right through the system is divided control. The Education Department manages one of the "agencies"...the Council of Agricultural Education another; the University a third, the Agricultural Department a fourth; and every one of these authorities is independent. Each treads a different road and "gangs its ain gait", with as little concern for the doings of its rivals as though it were the only pebble on the agricultural beach. The consequence is that agricultural education in Victoria has become very nearly as sterile as a desert.37

Martin Hansen tried to underplay this lack of correlation, saying that "until a larger measure of popular support is secured by the existing agencies, this absence of close connection between [the four bodies] does not appear to have been altogether disadvantageous. Each has developed, so far as they have developed, along its own lines and according to its own ideals".38 However, with the future of the agricultural students in mind, he could not deny that "there is still, however, not a sufficiently definite connection between the agricultural training given in the High Schools, and that given at Dookie College or the University. On the one hand, neither is there any close connection between the work done in the elementary schools and that in the Agricultural High Schools on the other".39

And this lack of communication did severely disadvantage the students. Writing in 1913, when the course had been in operation for six years, C.S. Pye, the principal of Dookie Agricultural College, discussed the agricultural high schools and noted several weaknesses:

36. 3 March 1914.
37. 3 March 1914.
39. Ibid., p.2.
The apparent functions of the Agricultural High School are to teach the pupils to observe correctly; to develop the practical mind; to give a sound education in mathematics, bookkeeping and English; and a good insight into manual training in carpentry and blacksmithing; also to give instructions in freehand and mechanical drawing, and in commercial geography. The ultimate life's work of the boy will in a measure regulate some of the other studies. Thus he may wish to - (a) Become a teacher under the Education Department, (b) be a student at an agricultural college, (c) enter the University for the degree course in agriculture, (d) return to his father's farm. The course could be so modified as to meet the cases mentioned, and optional subjects be allowed...

The student for the agricultural college could replace the theory of teaching by rhetoric and oratory, since the farming community requires speakers who can voice its needs at public gatherings and councils. It would also be advisable for students who wish to enter a degree course to take the subjects of rhetoric and oratory, possibly logic, and also a foreign language. The mission of the University and the Agricultural College is not only to turn out agriculturalists, but also educated men...40

Pye's description and emphases are illuminating as well as informative, for they make mockery of Tate's original statement that the schools were designed to provide an "advanced" education that would enable a boy "ultimately to become an educated, intelligent, practical farmer" (see above, page 50). Pye may have been suggesting that the agricultural course as prescribed satisfactorily met none of the requirements of the four career areas mentioned, and other evidence bears this out. In order to undertake this "advanced" education, the student entered the agricultural high school at grade nine level and, in order to be able to become a junior teacher, he had to study theory and practice of teaching - for which the agricultural course did not provide. If he wished to move on to the university and obtain a degree and a diploma in education, he had to complete the Senior Public Examination at grade eleven level. The agricultural

40. Ballarat star, 15 January 1913.
course, however, only went to grade ten level.

And those two years did not prepare him adequately either. In 1910, the headmaster of Warrnambool Agricultural High School, J.H. Braithwaite, commented that the course was too varied and comprehensive, and "the work cannot satisfactorily be done in two years if the educational result is to be valued". His complaints were supported by his counterpart at Shepparton, A.E. Watson, who noted in the same report that "the course seems a very full one to complete in two years". As far as being a farmer was concerned, the student graduated unprepared. In 1913, Headmaster J.H. Refshauge of Ballarat told the visiting South Australian Royal Commission of Education that "on leaving the school the pupils were not in a position to cultivate the land by themselves. They were not endowed with quite enough practical knowledge - and this despite the fact that they spent one-third of every week on the school farm!*

If the student aspired to veterinary or agricultural studies at the agricultural college or the university, he was similarly handicapped. Like Cherry before him, Pye emphasized precisely those subject areas for which the agricultural course did not provide, and yet were necessary prerequisites for further study. In 1910, in order to qualify for entry to the agricultural science course at Melbourne University, the student had to have passed at public examination level (that is, at least tenth grade), among other subjects, French or German, and for the veterinary science course, Latin, and either Greek, French or German. Young Samuel Fitzpatrick

* The reasons for this state of affairs will be discussed in the following chapter.


42. Ibid., p.86.

43. Ballarat star, 17 May 1913.
of Sale discovered this when, on the completion of his agricultural course, he wrote to Tate saying that he would like to undertake a veterinary science course at the university. Tate was advised by a departmental officer (did he not know himself?) that "this candidate required to pass in English, Geometry and Latin before he could take up the course. I recommend him to return to the Sale Agricultural High School to study for another year".44

However, even if he undertook it, Samuel's chances of successfully completing that extra year of academic studies were not great. In 1910, Braithwaite of Warrnambool pointed out that the practical work of the agricultural course was leading to a growing dislike of culture subjects among the students and, probably much the same as many science students undertaking English Expression in the Higher School Certificate today, they were not involving themselves in the humanitarian subjects and were becoming functionally illiterate.

Some of the students were already disadvantaged before they entered the agricultural course. In 1914, Headmaster F.C. Refshaugo of Wangaratta Agricultural High School wrote to Tate saying that "there are 15 junior students taking the Agricultural Course; some of these are but 13 years of age, and the most of them are very backward in their work. They require special attention, especially if the Agricultural side of the school is to be kept to the fore".46

* From this evidence, one wonders if parents thought of the agricultural course in much the same way as many have the junior technical school courses in the past – as an option for children "who don't have many brains".

44. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Department Correspondence, Sale High School, nn., 26 March 1909.


46. Departmental Correspondence, loc.cit., Wangaratta High School, nn., 18 February 1914.
That the agricultural course graduates rarely qualified to move into the tertiary sector of education was evidenced by J.H. Refshauge's statement in 1913 that "never had he been aware of the fact that any of his scholars had gone to Dookie College", and, three years later, this contention was supported by J.J. Carlisle, MLA, when he said that "It was supposed that a number of students would attend [the agricultural high school] and would afterwards go on to the agricultural college. So far as I know, the agricultural colleges have not received one student from any of the agricultural high schools, and the money spent on the agricultural high school is spent simply in giving the children a smattering of primary agriculture".*

Even those students not envisaging further education faced problems. They received no formal qualifications from the course. In 1910, J.H. Refshauge, who was then the headmaster of Sale Agricultural High School, wrote that there were no departmental exit examinations for the agricultural course as there were for the continuation course. The only examinations for which the agricultural students did sit were the ones set by their own teachers, and some of these contained questions of dubious value, such as the question in the Agriculture Part Two paper at Sale in 1908 which asked students to "describe a Berkshire pig". In 1912, W.F. Friday, Refshauge's successor, in revealing a significant wastage rate among the pupils, criticized this situation, saying that "no doubt a few more

* Changes in the relevant regulations were made in an attempt to remedy this situation around 1916, but, by then, the full agricultural course was on its last legs.

47. Reported in *Ballarat Star*, 17 May 1913.
49. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Sale High School, no.1908/14901, 26 December 1908.
students would remain till the end of their course if a certificate or diploma were granted to them on their completion of a successful course. Some incentive seems necessary, and everyone knows how highly a certificate is valued, both by student and by parent". 50

Nor were students encouraged to undertake the course by the department. F. Adamson 51 comments, in referring to the Leongatha Agricultural High School, that no departmental scholarships for the agricultural side of the school were given: they were all on the continuation side. In 1913, Watson of Shepparton summed up the whole situation when he wrote that "the agricultural student hardly knows where he is. He cannot see anything ahead of him". 52

Attempts were made by the department to place some of the graduates on the land. Section thirty-nine of the Closer Settlement Act of 1912, allowing a graduate of an agricultural high school course to take up a plot of land and not have to pay any money back for the first three years, was added in a specific effort to encourage the boys to attempt the course. However, even this was not successful, and J.H. Refshauge, in reply to a query from Tate on the reasons for the lack of agricultural students, commented:

"Even the closer settlement clause cannot be availed of by many, as the cost of a house and stock and general equipment came to £500 or £600. There seems to be a dead end ahead of the boy who takes up the course unless his parents are in a strong financial position. The fact that, in spite of the cutting up of estates, of compulsory purchase and of immigration to the State of land-seekers, the number of people engaged in agricultural, pastoral and dairying pursuits in the ten years 1901-11 showed a"


52. P.P. (Vic.), 1913/1914, vol.2, no.6 (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the year 1911-12), p.120.
decrease of 11,446, is an indication that farm life is not popular.../It has presented a drab appearance in comparison with many other occupations.53

Many school administrators very soon saw the obvious disadvantages of the agricultural course as it was set out, and some tried to make some changes to remedy the defects. At Wangaratta, for example, even before the school opened, it was announced that "French or German for students desiring to proceed to a degree or diploma in Agriculture is offered as part of the course".54 However, this variation only lasted one year, and by 1910, the students were taking "animal knowledge" instead of the language.55 (One wonders if pressure was imposed upon the school to make this change, and, if so, from where it originated, and why.) It has already been noted that Dr. Cherry of the Department of Agriculture espoused subjects not offered in the course, and by 1914 he was proposing a course which included the study of history, civics and a second language (see Appendix 7). Tate referred this course to Refshauge at Ballarat for comment, and he emphasized the need for more time in history and civics, a study of Latin and German, and the extension of geography and geology at the expense of practical agriculture.56 There is no evidence to suggest that Tate adopted these recommendations.

At Warrnambool, Braithwaite had also suggested a modification. He commented that

I am sorely afraid that most of the time given to the teaching of agriculture in many of our State schools is so much time wasted. To my mind, a satisfactory course would be:-

54. Wangaratta chronicle, 16 April 1908.
56. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, no.1914/15118, 19 October 1914.
English, 5 periods; languages, 3 periods; history, 3; geography, 2; science in relation to agriculture, 8; mathematics, 7; drawing, 4; sloyd and farmwork (alternate weeks), 4.\textsuperscript{57}

One aspect that all these suggestions had in common was the reduction of the time devoted to agriculture in favour of cultural subjects such as history and languages. Tate's reaction to these suggestions seems to have been lukewarm - perhaps uninterested. He accepted the suggestion for a short agricultural course in 1913 and sent a memorandum to Hansen, commenting that

In order to extend the knowledge of the work being done in agricultural high schools, to impress upon farmers the value and utility of this work and thus to increase the number of agricultural students the Minister has approved of the formation of special classes for short courses in these schools. These classes will be supplementary to the present classes taking the full agricultural course. So that teachers and farm managers may have the fullest freedom to develop such courses, or to establish classes for individual subjects, in order to meet local needs and to arouse local interest, the Director has decided not to issue any officially prescribed syllabus. Each head teacher is asked to prepare his own syllabus and to forward it to the Department before the end of February.\textsuperscript{58}

At a time when courses were, in general, rigidly prescribed by head office, one wonders whether or not Tate gave headmasters this unheard-of freedom in an attempt to discourage them from developing broader courses and thereby keeping the vocational emphasis in being. If he was attempting to nonplus them, then he was fairly successful, for by the end of January in the following year only two one-year courses had been proposed, by the headmasters of the Ballarat and Warrnambool schools (see Appendix 7 for details). Only the latter one was actually implemented, with limited success.

\textsuperscript{57} P.P. (Vic.), 1912, vol.2, no.12 (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the year 1910-11), p.120.

\textsuperscript{58} P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, nn., 29 December 1913.
Neither of them included language study, but both recommended the reduction of the time spent on practical agriculture.

At no stage is there evidence to suggest that Tate was eager to see the full two-year agricultural course modified in order to increase its usefulness and attractiveness. His failure to do this leads one to believe that he deliberately did little to stop the rot. The full agricultural course lacked a satisfactory number of students in each school offering it from the very start, and, as time went on, the numbers undertaking it diminished even further (see Appendix 8). Writing to the secretary of the department in 1913, the mayor of Ballarat, J.J. Brokenshire, lamented the lack of agricultural students at the local school and reiterated the main causes of the failure:

Unquestionably one reason for the lack of public interest in agriculture is the fact that for all examinations for the Public Service, for matriculation and for higher education generally, the study of agriculture, if not forbidden, is practically discountenanced by those who order examinations and educational tests. A dead language is made a compulsory subject for University courses. The science of agriculture is not a compulsory subject.59

He went on to recommend that agriculture be made a compulsory subject for entrance to the university. However, Tate was not prepared to support this suggestion, and Hansen commented in reply that "the Director is of the opinion that a proposal to make agriculture a compulsory subject for entrance to the University would not be entertained".60 However, as has already been noted, he did decide that agriculture should be a compulsory subject for all country boys taking the Intermediate Examination, which replaced the Junior Public

60. Ibid.
Examination.

So while he believed in agriculture as a necessary subject of the rural child's curriculum, Tate's faith in the full agricultural course as it was prescribed for Victorian schools is heavily suspect, and in no publication after 1911 did he recommend its retention or extension. The attitude of both Tate and his department towards this course was, from the start, decidedly lukewarm. The lack of popular support did little to help its progress at the beginning, and the attitude from the people at head office positively damaged it. That attitude is the subject of the following chapter.
CHAPTER SIX: INDIFFERENCE OR INTENT?

...the general public can fairly claim to have been so misled in this matter I am quite sure that 90 per cent of country people are thus deceived. This shire should subsidize agricultural education well, but it should be for agricultural people, and not so that nine-tenths of the money is used to unsuccessfully increase the 'blackcoated brigade in cities'.

Dr. [77] Courtney speaking at a Ballarat Shire Council luncheon after the official opening of the Ballarat Agricultural High School, 1910.*

The first two agricultural high schools were opened in 1907, and by 1911, there were nine. As well, two continuation schools were established at Ballarat and Bendigo. Frank Tate's keenness to open these schools is evidenced by the situation that the Ballarat Continuation School found itself in in 1907. Helen Cotton, the school's historian, points out that "the decision of the Government to open the school early in 1907 was a hurried one, and was carried through though no definite plans had been made for accommodation".1 (The situation at Ballarat will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven.) At Sale and Warrnambool the schools also opened in temporary premises, and proper buildings were not erected until some time afterwards.

The location of continuation schools at the two largest regional centres of Victoria after Geelong (which was probably considered to be too close to Melbourne to warrant a school) seems to be self-explanatory. However, reasons for the locations of the various agricultural high schools are not so easy to deduce.** The

* Ballarat star, 31 August 1910.

** Schools were established at Ballarat, Colac, Leongatha, Mansfield, Sale, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warragul and Warrnambool, as well as the special one at Mildura.

Wangaratta Chronicle informs us that Warrnambool and Sale were favoured because they had some suitable buildings and they were, and still are, centres for their respective regions. However, the reasons for the selection of other, smaller centres such as Colac and Mansfield ahead of other competitors such as Donald and Yea are difficult to discover. Evidence to suggest that they were so located partly because of political pressure exerted by energetic local members of parliament is scant, but support for the contention that this may have often been the case is provided by an exchange between Tate and A.A. Billson, the member for Ovens (soon to become Minister of Public Instruction himself) in 1907. Billson had obviously been pressing Tate to establish a continuation school (note, not necessarily an agricultural high school) in his electorate, preferably in his home town of Beechworth. In a reply which also revealed, once again, his desire to establish post-primary schools wherever he could, Tate said that "I am not able to advise as between Wangaratta and Beechworth. I believe so strongly in extending the work of the Education Department in this way that I should advocate both if I thought it likely they should be established". 

When the schools at the chosen sites were first opened, they all made fairly auspicious starts in their agricultural course, despite the fact that none of them possessed the legally required fifty agricultural students. At Warrnambool in 1908–9, for example, between thirty-five and forty per cent of the students were undertaking the agricultural course. However — and this pattern developed at every school — despite the fact that the school population generally

2. 13 February 1907.

increased, the proportion of the students undertaking the full agricultural course steadily declined, so that, by 1911-12, it had dropped to about fifteen per cent (see Appendix 8). Numbers in all schools continued to fall until a situation existed such as that at Wangaratta after 1916⁴ and Leongatha after 1917⁵ where no students were reported as taking the full agricultural course.

While much of the blame for this state of affairs can be placed upon the nature of the course itself, the approach of Tate and the department also severely disadvantaged the agricultural sectors from the very start. It has already been noted that the entrance regulations for agricultural high schools - twenty acres of land for a farm, one-half of the cost of the buildings, and fifty agricultural students - had been partly circumvented by the department in order to get the schools open, and Tate was quick to point out what he saw as being the real function of the schools when he wrote in 1908 that "the continuation schools recently established for the training of Junior Teachers might easily be developed into secondary schools... and would meet the needs of cities, while the agricultural high schools, if the practical side of their work is not unduly emphasised, would meet the needs of the country districts".⁶ My emphasis.

There were protests from the country districts about this approach. In the Argus in 1909, a correspondent calling himself

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* It is also interesting to note that Tate was stating here his belief that the cities did have a need for secondary educational facilities, long before he began establishing secondary schools in them on a sizeable scale.

4. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Wangaratta High School, nn., 1 August 1928.


6. Preliminary report of the director of education...Melbourne, 1908, p.63.
"XYZ" informed the readers that

What the Education Department will do may be judged from what it now does. It has made three experiments in Agricultural High Schools at Warrnambool, Sale and Wangaratta - and each one violates the conditions laid down by Parliamentary authority for its existence. In not one case has the necessary amount of money or the necessary provision of land been made locally; in not one was the minimum number of pupils provided. They are schools which pretend to be one thing and are in reality another. Mr. Adamson, of Wesley College, has already in your columns drawn attention to the cost of the Wangaratta High School, as announced in triumphant accents by the Minister for Education. The school at that moment had 17 pupils, it represented a cost in buildings of £264 per place, and a teaching cost for the same number of pupils of £74 per pupil. Today this "agricultural" high school has 33 pupils, of whom 14 are girls. Of the 19 boys, there are only five or six taking up the agricultural course purely. The subjects of instruction on the so-called continuation side include Latin, French, history, drawing, etc. Your readers can judge from this how much of "agriculture" there is in this agricultural high school. 7

And others, such as Dr. Courtney of Ballarat (quoted in the Introduction to this chapter), also expressed their cynicism. However, by 1909, Tate was in a sufficiently strong position to be able to weather such attacks. As Rule 8 comments, prosperity began to return after 1905, and this undoubtedly softened the attitudes, both of the parliamentarians and the independent school interests (not so much, however, that they were prepared to accept a full State secondary system in 1909, as shall be seen in chapter seven).

When the schools were opened, what types of students did they have, and how good were they? The records of Sale High School enable us to make a detailed study of the first intake of that institution as an example of what occurred in the schools. Despite the initially poor response to the appeal for funds, the first intake was sub-

stantial, with forty-six children enrolling on the first day in 1907. These children came from many parts of Gippsland, from as far away as Omeo and Mirboo North (see Appendix 9), and such a wide spread indicates that there was a considerable demand for State post-primary education in this region.* However, approximately one-third of them came from Sale itself, and of those from outside the town, only slightly more than half of them had parents who were farmers and graziers (see Appendix 10). Only about forty per cent of the parents of the first intake were agriculturalists (see Appendix II).

Clearly, the response from the Gippsland farmers was only mediocre, and this fact is in line with the general response to the agricultural course in the countryside as illustrated in chapter five. In fact, there is considerable evidence to suggest that, in many cases, most of the agricultural students were the children, not of farmers, but of townspeople. Helen Cotton's comments that this was the case at Ballarat, and from Warragul in 1914, Headmaster J.P. McLennan wrote to the department that "most of my farm students have been the sons of businessmen in the town. The businessman knows the

* The Wangaratta and Ballarat schools had similar radii. Students at Wangaratta in 1909 came from Stanley, Rutherglen, Great Southern, Tallangatta, Porepunkah, Violet Town, Benalla, Hansonville, Milawa, Eldorado, Docker's Plains, Taminick, Oxley, Moyhu, Greta, Londrigan and Wodonga, as well as from Wangaratta itself (Wangaratta Chronicle, 22 December 1909). At Ballarat in 1911, two hundred of the three hundred students came from outside the city, from places such as Lynton, Smeaton, Creswick, Dunns-town, Clunes, Cressy, Daylesford, Kingston, Gordon, Buninyong, Warrenheip, Portland, Coleraine, Heywood, Hamilton, Horsham, Goroke, Dimboola, Warracknabeal, Beulah, Watchem, Kerang, Maryborough, Avoca, Melbourne and Geelong (Ballarat Agricultural High School Prospectus for 1911: P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, no.1911/12585, 19 September 1911).

value of special training; more of the next generation of farmers will know it, too, in my opinion. At Shepparton, according to Roy Clydesdale, a large percentage of the first intake of agricultural students came from the town, and were the sons of people such as auctioneers and publicans. His own father was a coachbuilder. Something like eighty per cent of the boys opted to take agriculture because, according to him, no incentive was offered at that time for them to undertake the continuation course, and it seemed logical to do the agricultural course.

However, few of the graduates among that intake seem to have taken up agriculture as a career. After a brief sojourn as a labourer on the school farm, Clydesdale moved to Melbourne, undertook a course in electrical engineering with the International Correspondence School, and finally returned to Mooroopna to work in the local waterworks trust. Another of his classmates, Francis Selleck, moved on to become the Lord Mayor of Melbourne and receive a knighthood.

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* It is interesting to wonder whether the department or the headmaster tried to discourage the boys from taking the continuation course.

** The initial acceptance of the agricultural course by parents who were not farmers may have been as a result of their lack of understanding, as opposed to the farmers, of what was and was not useful in the course. There is also evidence to suggest that those agricultural pupils who were the children of farmers came from distant places, which meant that their parents were often not in a position to view the course at first hand. In 1914, Headmaster J.H. Refshauge of Ballarat wrote that "the opinions of various bodies of educational experts have invariably been in favour of the methods of carrying out agricultural education at this school, yet, from the first, but scant encouragement has been given by the people of Ballarat. Most of the agricultural students are from distant places. Gippsland, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia have, at the present time, representatives at the school". (P.P. (Vic.), 1914, vol.2, no.1 (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the year 1912-13), p.88).

It did not even take the townsfolk long to assess the course, however. By 1915, Headmaster W.H. Callister of Shepparton was
At Wangaratta, the situation was similar. Of the first intake in 1909, the overwhelming proportion were junior teachers by 1914. Other occupations included a coachbuilder, a mechanic in the Newport railway workshops, a public servant and a bank teller. The fortunes of many were represented by A.F. Warkock, who entered the school in 1909 as part of the first intake, undertook the agricultural course, but ended up by becoming a clerk in the Titles Office in Melbourne. It was only after service in the First World War that he returned to the land at Winton - possibly as a soldier-settler.

When the pupils entered the schools, what were they likely to have found? The first thing that may have struck them was the image of a headmaster and a school advisory council beleaguered by problems. Little of the blame for the failure of the agricultural sectors in the schools can be placed upon these well-meaning, if sometimes misguided people (see below page 96). Their reports to the department were concerned, more than with anything else, with the progress of the farms, and the lengthy sections of reports devoted to this aspect were out of all proportion to the importance of the course in terms of the numbers of students enrolled in it. Often it was the case that the headmaster's own initiatives were all that

writing that "most of the boys at the school enter the service of the Education Department as teachers, or seek office work. But some come from the farm to return to the farm, these, at least, should do agriculture. At present, many of them do not; nor do any of the boys from this town enter the school to take up that work". (P.P. (Vic.), 1915, vol.2, no.13 (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the year 1913-14), p.59).
10. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Warragul High School, no.1914/3125, 21 February 1914.
12. Information obtained from an honour roll in the record of Junior and Senior Public Examination entrances 1913-1920 for Wangaratta High School - in the possession of the principal, Wangaratta High School.
13. Ibid.
kept the agricultural sector going. At Ballarat, for example, J.H. Refshauge offered, out of his own pocket, a gold medal for the best results obtained from, and the best management of, a cereal plot by a student. According to the school's historian, he did all the pioneering work on the school farm, and to make it a success was his life's ambition. "That he failed in this is to be attributed solely to causes beyond his control and of which he, no less than the work he loved, was the victim."\(^\text{14}\)

Undoubtedly, the greatest cause of this failure was the lack of involvement by the department. In 1913, the *Shepparton News* reflected upon this when it commented that

> ...there is a wholesome misgiving that many of the departures in which departmental energy has wasted itself of recent years has been very much in the nature of pretence - that the department professes to undertake a duty, and discharges it in a manner so feeble and ineffective as to detract somewhat from the glitter of the ponderous and impressive name by which the institution is known. One is led into this reflection by an examination of the work done by what are called agricultural high schools.\(^\text{15}\)

Whether the department was simply indifferent to the agricultural course, or whether it deliberately attempted to sabotage it, is a difficult question to answer. Tate hinted at the latter situation in 1916 when writing to the editor of the *Ballarat Courier* in response to one of its editorials. While maintaining the essential facade that the course was a good one and suited to the Victorian situation, he protested that "the agricultural high schools are well-conceived - that has been admitted by dozens of visitors here whose opinion is worth having - but from the first there have been strong influences at work against them, some of these influences arising within the Department itself".\(^\text{16}\) That Tate should recognize

\(^{14}\) Cotton, op.cit., p.12.
\(^{15}\) 29 December 1913.
\(^{16}\) F.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, nn., 23 November 1916.
this departmental opposition while doing little about it, suggests
that, at best, it was condoned by those at the top, and, at worst,
it emanated from them, and it manifested itself in a number of ways.

Already battling against an apathetic rural population, the
schools received little or no help from those at head office when
they opened. For a start, even when they wished to donate money
towards the school - and let us keep in mind the fact that the
regulations asked for a local donation of fifty per cent of the
building cost - local government instrumentalities found that they
were prevented from doing so by an Act which forbade such offerings.
Thus we have the Rodney Shire Council stating in 1907 that it was
sympathetic to the cause of an agricultural high school in
Shepparton, but the law did not allow it to make donations.¹⁷ One
suspects that the Rodney councillors used this as an excuse rather
than as a valid reason for not giving money, for their counterparts
in North Ovens and Oxley had already pledged one hundred pounds each
towards the Wangaratta school before they discovered the existence
of this ordinance.¹⁸ The problem was overcome and the donations
legalized by an Act passed on 17 December 1907,¹⁹ but the very fact
that it was overlooked at first, yet quickly realized once donations
had been made, indicates that the whole question of the schools had
not been investigated very carefully in Melbourne, either through
hastiness, deliberate lack of concern, or both.

If they thought that their troubles were over when this Act was
finally passed, then the founders of the new schools were sadly
mistaken. Their next problem arose in the form of apathy in the local

¹⁹. Ibid., 17 December 1907.
primary schools. In his report for June, 1907, the first headmaster of Sale Agricultural High School, J.H. Refshauge, commented upon the lack of interest in the school by the State school teachers of the district. He lamented the fact that he "wrote to thirty teachers in the Warragul Inspectorial District asking them to send the names of qualified students who would accept free education at the Agricultural High School. Only one teacher replied to the invitation. This speaks for itself". However, his complaint seems to have fallen upon deaf ears in much the same way as did his original request, for no instruction regarding support for the new institutions seems to have been sent by the department to the primary schools. Two years later J.F. Schilling, Refshauge's counterpart at Wangaratta, expressed the same grievance when he wrote that "of the 100 appeals I sent out to the District Head Teachers several days ago, only two have replied". Worse than this, he was actually losing potential students to the Melbourne Continuation School. In December of that year he informed the department that three pupils from the Rutherglen State School were going to Melbourne instead of Wangaratta in 1910.

In an attempt to salvage some of these losses, he noted in the information column of the local newspaper two months later that "many parents have conceived the idea that only agricultural subjects are taught at the school, but such is not the case, as a continuation school is also provided, and the same subjects are taught as at the Melbourne Continuation School".

20. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Sale High School, no.1907/8573, 5 July 1907.
22. Ibid., nn., 6 December 1909.
The schools were also severely disadvantaged by a lack of power at the local level. Everything that was done, it seemed, had to be authorized by head office. In 1911, the Wangaratta chronicle protested that if high school councils did not have some competent agricultural authority to whom their practical proposals could be submitted, then they would probably resign, because "they have no more power than a labourer on the farm...nothing moves on the farm until the word has been spoken by an official in Melbourne who knows nothing about it, and not then until the word has been passed down to the head teacher, and he is not a farmer". Naturally, there was a great lack of understanding on the part of the men in the department, many of whom were city-born and bred. For years, the schools had to suffer inspectors who were not qualified in agricultural subjects (Hansen noted in 1915 that an inspector specially qualified in agriculture had recently been appointed - eight years after the opening of the first agricultural high school) and who possessed an outlook that was decidedly urban. As an example of this, whilst reporting upon a trip to the Western District as a seconded inspector in 1911, Joseph Hocking expressed his opinion that agricultural high school buildings should not be established on farm sites because, among other reasons, "there are occurrences among stock that I should not wish adolescent girls to witness".

Unfortunately the lack of empathy did not stop at this level. In the matter of teachers qualified to teach agricultural science, the schools were never adequately staffed. Hansen reported in 1915 that only then had the target of one agricultural science teacher per

24. 9 December 1911.
26. Ibid., High Schools Generally, no.1911/9816, 14 July 1911.
school been reached, and of those teachers, only eight had a bachelor's degree or a diploma from the university.*27 Even as late as 1926, there were only five agricultural science teachers on the secondary roll.28 F. Adamson contradicts Hansen in commenting that, each year, staff changes were made at Leongatha, but no teacher qualified in agricultural science was ever appointed. Throughout the history of the school the first headmaster, L. Mesley, remained the only staff member at all qualified to teach agriculture, and his qualifications were theoretical rather than practical.29

This also occurred at other high schools. The frustration of the headmasters was epitomized in 1910 when J.F. Schilling of Wangaratta wrote to the secretary of the department, complaining that it had often ignored his requests for more suitable staff. He added that "in some cases, my letters were not even acknowledged".30 In 1909, Councillor J.J. Brokenshire of Ballarat observed "that he had been told that in some of the agricultural colleges [sic] the officers placed in charge had had comparatively little agricultural knowledge... at one of the colleges a gentleman had been placed in charge who was very high up in the Education Department but who had very little experience in agricultural teaching. He was appointed because his years of office in the department warranted him being in a higher position".

* Hansen was treading a thin line here for, only three months prior to this statement, the Wangaratta school advisory council had put in a request to the department for a teacher of agriculture! (Minutes of the Wangaratta Agricultural High School Advisory Council, 26 March 1915, p.89 - in the possession of the principal, Wangaratta High School.)

30. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Wangaratta High School, no.1910/7083, 30 May 1910.
position in the service." In reply to such criticism, Tate once again revealed his real opinion about the agricultural sectors when he commented that

It must be borne in mind in discussing the qualifications necessary in the Head Master of such a school that these schools are essentially high schools for continuing the education of boys and girls beyond the primary school standard. They are not merely schools in which familiarity with farm operations is the end sought to be achieved. The experience of Denmark, of Canada, of the United States, where successful agricultural education has been achieved, is that the first condition of success is to arouse and develop the general intelligence of the future farmer... The combined school, as at Sale, Warrnambool, Shepparton and Wangaratta is not, and cannot be, merely a farm school. It is essentially a high school, and the qualifications demanded of its teachers should be not a whit less than are demanded of the teachers of a good secondary school.*

In further justifying this argument, Tate misled the politicians on the question of the availability of qualified agricultural science teachers and, as shall be seen later in the chapter, on the quality of farm managers. He replied to a question in Parliament from G.A. Elmslie that "no headmaster [for an agricultural high school] should be chosen merely because he can teach agriculture in an elementary school. It is easy to obtain skilled assistants to teach Science and Agriculture, and to obtain well-educated and skilled farm workers..."

* Reid's comment in quoting this statement is both interesting and pertinent. He points out that what was, in late 1904, to be a "special course" which would interfere as little as possible with the work done by the existing secondary schools had, by 1909, become a course "to arouse and develop the general intelligence", and what were to be higher primary or continuation schools were now avowedly "high schools", staffed by teachers with qualifications indistinguishable from those of the "good secondary school" - so much had Tate's confidence grown in the ensuing period. (Teachers and bureaucracy, p.151.)


managers to direct the practical work".  

With a staff comprised almost entirely of academics, it seems, as Adamson points out, that there was an emphasis in the schools on the academic rather than the practical. The farm work was considered as the 'tag-end' to other school work, and the subjects emphasized at Leongatha were those relating to the course for the public examinations, for Mesley felt that the only agricultural course that his school was able to offer was leading to no real goal, and he wanted to ensure that all pupils had a chance to obtain a recognized certificate before they left the school. This seemed to be a widespread feeling, and it is difficult to disagree with Bessant's summation that, along with the contempt for theory by the practical farmers, the knowledge that many of the school agricultural courses were organized by teachers with little practical farming experience helped immensely to defeat the agricultural high schools.

The men in Parliament frequently complained about this situation, often in colourful terms. As we have seen, Elmslie queried it in 1909, and the complaints multiplied during the war years when the failure of the agricultural sectors was evident to all. A. Hicks had raised the question as early as 1907, protesting that

He did not see why the agricultural high schools and the continuation school should be connected. He did not think there were fifty pupils in the State who were attending the agricultural high schools in order to go in for farming. If young people were to be trained for farming, they should be put in the hands, not of State school teachers, but of men who knew something about farms...The agricultural high schools should be separated from /The Education/ Department

and should have the attention of the Minister of Agriculture. The object of such schools was to train young people to go on farms for the cultivation of the soil, and he could not understand how they could receive that education there from teachers from the continuation school. It seemed to him that this agricultural high school was a farce.36

In 1916, after no move had been made to change the situation, John Lemmon made a very obvious yet pertinent point when he commented that

What has happened in connexion with our technical schools is happening in connexion with the agricultural high schools. Very often the men in charge have had no practical experience. The history of countries where these schools have been made a success shows that the very opposite policy has been adopted. The man who is not a practical man is put aside in favour of the practical man.37

Perhaps the most interesting and amusing comment on this issue was made by E.J. Hogan, when he said in 1915 that

I know...that many of the theoretical agriculturalists who are appointed to take charge of these institutions know as much about agriculture as agriculture knows about them. To expect practical men to have their sons taught by such gentlemen is preposterous, and parents will not do it. It is like teaching one's grandmother to suck eggs.38

In the luxury — and safety — of retirement in 1935, Tate was able to turn around and admit to the error of this policy. He commented that

...my experience has been that when such schools have been placed in charge of the academically-trained secondary teacher, or when similar courses have been attempted as part of an ordinary secondary school, new and lower values have been attached to important subjects, there has been a steady diminution of practical work, and unreality and remoteness from life have crept in.39

Tate's failure to take the necessary remedial action, while others were making such criticisms both before and soon after the schools were opened, makes his "sadder but wiser" attitude of 1935 ring somewhat hollow.

If the students undertaking the agricultural course did not have properly qualified teachers, nor did they have suitable texts. In a period when Australia was still heavily dependent upon overseas books in all subject areas, it was not likely that many writers or publishing companies were going to put themselves out for a handful of agricultural students, and the foreign material that was available was generally inappropriate. In the Education gazette and teachers' aid in 1908, the Supervisor of Agricultural Education, J.P. McLennan, slated the habit of reliance upon an irrelevant textbook - Kirk's Principles of agriculture. Students who read it, he said, "were just wasting time". 40 First indication of an appropriate text came in September, 1911, when the gazette announced the forthcoming publication of a book by McLennan and J.H. Refshauge, which was applicable to both State and high school courses. 41 Apart from this, however, the field was limited.

As if the great disadvantage of the lack of suitable teachers and texts were not enough, the agricultural students faced still more problems. From the very start, necessary materials were in short supply. At Sale, for example, only a few months after the school opened, Headmaster J.W. Refshauge was complaining that "causes initiating against the progress of the Agricultural students have been the want of equipment in the Physics and Chemistry rooms". 42

41. Ibid., vol.xi, no.9, 22 September 1911, p.296.
42. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Sale High School, no.1907/12708, 2 September 1907.
and in 1910 he wrote to Inspector W. Hamilton, saying that he could not obtain trees and shrubs from the forestry branch of the Department of Agriculture because the school was not registered as a State school! This situation was not rectified to any great extent. There was a constant lack of funds, and the schools were not helped by the fact that, in 1907, the Education Department, in one of its few uses of the Department of Agriculture, handed over to that body the responsibility for the costs of the farms.\textsuperscript{44} The Department of Agriculture seemed lukewarm on the issue, no doubt because it too lacked funds. In 1912, for example, in response to a request from Inspector A. Fussell for a mare for Leongatha Agricultural High School, the agricultural department replied that it could not undertake to make further purchases of stock for the high schools.\textsuperscript{45} In 1916, when requested by Headmaster W.F. Friday of Sale to purchase a bull and test the school's cows, it commented that it could not provide any official to inspect prospective bulls and test the herd.\textsuperscript{46}

However, we must not condemn the Department of Agriculture too much, for the Education Department, which held prime responsibility for the welfare of the schools, was no better. It refused the most menial of requests, such as the one from J.F. Schilling of Wangaratta, asking for twenty copies of the monthly \underline{Journal of agriculture} for the agricultural students.\textsuperscript{47} In 1913 Schilling's successor, F.C.

\textsuperscript{*} Until the Education Act of 1910, the agricultural high schools were in an entirely separate class from the State schools. Their teachers were on different salary levels, and were not classified on the teachers' roll.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid., Ballarat High School, nn., 6 February 1910.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., Sale High School, no.1907/7262, 31 May 1907.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., High Schools Generally, no.1912/12719, 27 August 1912.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., Sale High School, nn., 28 November 1916.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., Wangaratta High School, nn., 19 October 1910.
\end{itemize}
Refsheuge, struck an equally solid brick wall when he requested funds to pay a local blacksmith to give instructions in smithing to the students. 48

The department's lack of interest seemed to know few bounds. While publicly protesting that the people did not realize what a valuable asset the agricultural high schools were, it could, almost in the same breath, discourage attempts to publicize them. In 1912, W. Edwards, manager of the Great International Picture Company, wrote to the department saying that he was contemplating taking "a series of animated pictures in connection with the High School of this City, and I intend taking the film through all the country district of Ballarat". 49 He requested a subsidy from the department towards the defraying of the costs of production. Apparently without making any attempt to establish his bona fides and investigate his suggestion, the department quickly replied in the negative.

By 1914 finance was even more limited, so much so that even the managers on the school farms were considered expendable. In reply to a request from J.H. Refsheuge of Ballarat for permission to engage a new manager, the department replied that "there is no possibility of the appointment of a farm manager this year, as no funds are available". 50 As the financial impact of the war effort became more pronounced after 1914, the situation became very difficult, with the department attempting to abolish the position of farm manager altogether. In July 1915, for example, the manager at Wangaratta, D.N. Christensen, received notification from the

48. Ibid., nn., 8 August 1913.
49. Ibid., Ballarat High School, nn., 23 February 1912,
50. Ibid., no.1914/5248, 26 March 1914.
department that his salary had been reduced from £250 per annum to
£156. Naturally, he protested, but it only led to the department
suggesting his replacement in the following November by a labourer
in order to cut costs.  

The approach of the department was summed up well by J.G.
Johnstone in Parliament in 1916 when he said:

I am taking the opportunity to bring before the
Minister of Public Instruction, and the House
itself, the neglect in connexion with our agricultural
high schools which has often been spoken of here.
That the object for which these schools were
established has not been carried out is known to
every honourable member. A dreadful state of things
exists in most of these schools, although there are
exceptions. From my point of view, it has been
largely brought about by the want of interest that
the Education Department has taken in that part of
the curriculum supposed to be particularly connected
with the schools. The school at Colac is one of
those which have suffered. It promised to be an
important centre for young people who desired to
obtain agricultural education, but it has become
only a secondary school...

The only way to insure agricultural high schools
being of the advantage that they should be, is to
see that that part of the curriculum is as much
enforced as any other.  

The schools had great problems with the practical part of the
course, and the school farms on which it was conducted. It has
already been noted (see above page 85) that the practice on the farm
was regarded as the 'tag-end' of the course, and most of the
suggested course revisions recommended a reduction of the time spent
on it. As early as 1907 J.H. Refshauge commented in Sale that one of
the factors preventing the progress of the agricultural students was
"the exceptional amount of time needed in farm practice during the
month".  

51. Minutes of the Wangaratta Agricultural High School Advisory
Council, 9 July 1915, p.120 - in the possession of the principal,
Wangaratta High School.


53. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Sale High School, no.1907/12708, 2 September 1907.
From the evidence available, it seems that not only was the farm practice too lengthy (one-third of each week), and absorbing time that would have been better taken up by general educational studies, but also most of the time spent on the farm was wasted. Adamson records that many ex-students from Leongatha commented that nothing was taught at the school that could not have been taught at an ordinary farm. The practical agriculture on the farm was of little real value, and they saw it as a time for play. At Wangaratta, at a conference of delegates from district school committees and the high school council, a Mr. Ellis of Greta said that "he would like to see the scientific side of the school more prominent. Boys could learn to plow and so forth on their own farms". The boys were often used as providers of inexpensive labour while they were at the farms. In the Ballarat High School magazine in 1915, John Chatham wrote that "we are found to be of great assistance on the farm (especially at motor mechanical work)". However, instead of being employed to fix the tractor cheaply, they should have been given an education in scientific farming techniques.

A large part of the problem lay in the types of people employed as managers for these farms. Reports do show that some of them were skilled and efficient men in their trade, but in most cases, that trade was not teaching, and they were expected to give the pupils instruction in agricultural techniques. In 1911, for example, Headmaster A.E. Watson of Shepparton noted this when he wrote that the farm manager was not a teacher and therefore could not inspire

the boys as much and convince them that the course was as important as the literary side. 57

In some cases, the problem was even greater than this. Some farm managers were grossly incompetent at their work. Inspector Hamilton had strong views on the matter, and he wrote to Watson at Shepparton, saying that, "feeling that the farm manager was the weak spot in each of the places visited by me, I am determined not to let the boys go to the farm unless under the supervision of an experienced teacher". 58 Evidence seems to bear out his opinion. From Ballarat in 1910 J.H. Refshauge wrote of the manager, T. Brittlebank, that "he has very little power in managing lads, when the number exceeds eight or ten he is useless". 59 In the following year, Refshauge was complaining to Hamilton about Clowes, Brittlebank's successor:

His knowledge of the practical farm work is below average. This is evidenced by the ploughing and drilling which he did upon the farm previous to the arrival of dairy cows.

With practice, I have no doubt he would become skillful in this part of the work. Unfortunately, he is so lacking in energy and is so lazy that I cannot recommend his permanent appointment. 60

Brittlebank had moved to the Sale school farm, but he was also in trouble there by 1913, with Friday, the headmaster, asking Tate to either transfer or dismiss him.* 61

The situation was much the same in Shepparton. The first farm

* Brittlebank suffered a misfortune that gave him a reprieve. He was unlucky enough to lose a hand in a threshing machine while on the job and, as compensation, the department decided to keep him on, transferring him to Warrnambool in 1915.


58. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Shepparton High School, nn., 31 May 1909.


60. Ibid., no.1911/12585, 19 September 1911.

61. Ibid., Sale High School, nn., 8 April 1913.
manager, Ramsay, had little competence, according to Roy Clydesdale, and in 1911 Headmaster Watson complained to Hamilton, stating that lessons were not given, and the boys' notebooks were not being used. In 1912, he complained again that the boys' "labour was exploited, and their farm education was neglected, notwithstanding repeated instructions about the matter".

There were some competent farm managers, such as Gilchrist, who succeeded Ramsay at Shepparton in 1912, but it was unfortunately the case that these men were often not retained because the regulations made them subject to the headmaster's instructions, and it was difficult for such experienced people to accept instructions from laymen. In 1911 the Wangaratta Chronicle noted this problem when discussing reforms needed in the management of the agricultural high schools if they were to be of any practical use as an educational force in country districts. It pointed out that "the farm manager should be manager of the farm not in name only but in fact," and it commented that the local school had lost a good manager in Mr. Gordon because of interference in his management work, and that a similar situation had developed at both Sale and Shepparton. In addition, the newspaper commented wryly on Tate's role: "Here then we see that the Education Department has had the same experience in three schools out of five. Yet it has not occurred to the Director to change the system which produces these injurious results". As with the course reforms, Tate's lack of redress to these problems

63. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Shepparton High School, nn., 3 November 1911.
64. Ibid., nn., 7 February 1912.
65. 9 December 1911.
66. Ibid.
arouses suspicion.

The farms themselves also presented a great problem. It will be recalled that the regulations governing the establishment of agricultural high schools stated that a farm site of at least twenty acres had to be provided as part of the local contribution to the school.* Sadly, in many cases, such as that of Ballarat, the quality of the land provided was poor. The plot in that city, while being four times the minimum size required, was described as being "almost barren", poor quality land in bad physical condition. When F.W. Hagelthorn saw it in 1912, he described it as being "perhaps the most hungry and uninviting looking [land] in Victoria". 68

Even if the land was of a fair quality, as at Shepparton, the farms faced an unequal battle because they were expected to run at a profit. J.H. Rofshauge of Ballarat pointed out the futility of this situation as far as his plot was concerned when he wrote in 1911:

It is doubtful whether the farms attached to the agricultural high schools can ever be made to produce a profit in the commercial sense. Profit over and above working expenses, and interest on capital invested, may be obtained in the case of those which have lands of exceptional fertility, but on farms like that attached to this school, this is impossible. The labor employed is the most expensive. Much of the laborer's time is occupied in teaching practical work to the students. The result is that ploughing, sub-soiling, drilling, and all operations are performed at a very slow rate.

* As with the other regulations governing the schools, the one about farm size was also circumvented by Tate and the department. In reporting on the farms in 1916, Hansen provided the figures on their various sizes. They ranged from eighty acres at Ballarat to sixteen at Colac (P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, nn., 7 December 1916).

68. Ballarat star, 12 May 1913.
Experimental and, in a lesser degree, research work occupy much time. The experimental plots are necessary for educational purposes, but give no direct returns. 69 

This subject is one of the few concerning the agricultural high schools that Tate did speak out on while he was director, and the fact that he did so seems to suggest that he felt strongly on the matter. "A school farm", said Tate, "is primarily educational and not commercial. No educational institution worth anything returns a profit in pounds, shillings and pence". 70 

Other headmasters and school councils supported Refshauge's statement. The Wangaratta school council minutes record that, in 1919, the secretary stated, in reply to a letter from the department questioning the value of continuing the farm, that the total losses for six and a half years were £1947/16/9d. In his opinion it was almost impossible to make a farm of twenty acres pay its way. In reply, the local member of parliament, J.W. Bowser (himself a former Minister of Public Instruction in the reformed Bent Government), said that it was found that it took many years to establish successful agricultural colleges, and it was just as logical to expect the school to pay as to expect the farm to. 71 William O'Callaghan, a local historian, summed up the Wangaratta situation in writing that "despite its early praise the farm did not prosper. Frequent changes in the position of farm manager, the impossibility of running a 20-acre farm at a profit, and the dwindling number of students taking the agricultural course resulted in the farm ceasing to be of practical importance in 1916". 72 

70. Continued education: our opportunity and our obligation, Melbourne, 1920, p.38. 
An interesting point to consider is what impact the well-meaning but generally unqualified members of the advisory councils — including the headmasters — had upon the farms' lack of success. One particular session of the Wangaratta body, called to discuss ways of reducing the costs of the farm, is illuminating in that it reveals complete confusion amongst the local administrators. It began with a comment that one worker was sufficient for the farm. Mr. Dunne expressed the belief that the farm was too big for one, but too small for two. Mr. Callender then suggested that a meeting of the council ought to be held at the farm to investigate the matter thoroughly. Why? — Interjected Bowser. He did not see how such a meeting would bring matters any nearer to finality. Trotman, the headmaster, then added his pearl of wisdom to the discussion: he thought there were too many cattle. As the councils seemed to be mainly composed of local notables, church ministers and businessmen, it was hardly likely that too much expertise in farm matters would be revealed, and the interference of such groups in the management of the farms would have done little to ensure successful and profitable operations.

Nor were the prospects of the farms made any easier during the war years by the department's financial stringency. In 1915, for example, the Wangaratta school council noted that the department was, for the first time, taking into account the manager's salary, interest on capital, depreciation, labour costs for repairs, incidental and travelling expenses, material and stores costs, and coal and coke costs when estimates of the farm expenditure were being made up. The council deplored the inclusion of these items as working

74. Ibid., 15 March 1915, p.82.
expenses, and it can be seen how difficult it would have been for them to return a balance sheet that was not in the red when they were operating under such constraints.

There were examples of success amid the failures, however. The farm at Shepparton stands out as being a successful venture. H.G. Martindale, the school's historian, records that, for some years before 1927, the farm was the only one to return a profit, and it was only the depression of the 1930s that finally led to its financial demise.\(^75\) He commented that

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\text{In its time the farm had furnished the school with certain individual characteristics and the experimental work had been of value to the district, while many ex-students, who passed on to rural pursuits, remembered with gratitude the lessons and experience they had gained there. It had served a good purpose...} \quad 76
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The reasons for the Shepparton farm's relative success lay in its uniqueness. Apart from the special one at Mildura, it was the only school farm established in a zone of intensive agriculture. When it was established in the first decade of this century, the Goulburn Valley region was just turning to irrigation, and the experiments on the farm were to prove of value to the budding orchardists, tobacco growers and other horticulturalists of the area. As the Shepparton News commented in 1911, "Shepparton High School is the only institution of the kind in the State at which practical experience can be gained in irrigation, and as irrigation is at present the popular policy, it may be expected that in the very near future the school will be attended by students from all parts of Victoria, and even the Commonwealth."\(^77\) While this expectation

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75. The story of Shepparton High School, Shepparton, 1946, p.36.
77. 9 May 1911.
turned out to be something of a pipedream, the local farmers did nevertheless gain some valuable information from the farm's experiments. Roy Clydesdale⁷⁸ remembers that many farmers benefited from an experiment in the use of manures for lucerne production. The reasons for the success of this farm he places squarely on the shoulders of Gilchrist, the manager, and Watson, the headmaster, both of whom, he says, were practically minded.

However, the success was relative to that of the other school farms. Not all of the local farmers accepted the farm, and Clydesdale recalls many riding past in their drays, scoffing loudly at the manager and the boys in the fields. When they saw pigs lying on specially constructed concrete and straw beds in their sties, they "split their sides with laughter".*

The department's financial stringency severely handicapped the Shepparton farm, as it did the others. In 1913, the leader of the Shepparton News complained that its policy of help towards the running of the farms had changed for the worse, even to the extent of cutting council estimates on the farm by one hundred pounds. As it pointed out,

> The farm is on the high road to success, and that it will eventually become a paying proposition seems much nearer realisation than was thought possible twelve months or so ago. But if an unwise economy is shown by the authorities in Melbourne, who have little knowledge of what is taking place on the farm, its area of usefulness is likely to be seriously hindered, if not altogether destroyed.⁷⁹

Given all the difficulties of staff and finance, it is

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* This practice was based upon Watson's belief that, given proper conditions, the pig will be the cleanest of all animals.

⁷⁸. Interview, 26 February 1976.
⁷⁹. 4 December 1913.
interesting to note that many of the school farms were agriculturally
successful in many ways. As Adamson comments, they made some
noteworthy contributions to agriculture and the public welfare of
the State. Shepparton's contribution has already been recorded, and
Leongatha prided itself on its pedigree Jersey herd. At Wangaratta,
the manager assessed the value of his farm as lying in several areas:
the value to the district of pure stock for breeding purposes; the
demonstration of the value of irrigation to fodder crops such as
lucerne; the selection of proper varieties of fodder crops suitable
to the district, and the providing of information on crop-raising,
sanitation and building arrangement to visitors - of which it
received about fifteen per month. However, the most important purpose of the farms - that of
providing a valuable practical education for the students - is not
mentioned, and in this function they failed. Claims of success such
as those mentioned above must be offset by comments such as those
from "Hayseed" in the Ballarat Courier, complaining that the local
farm had been inefficiently run, and farmer Thomas Robinson of
Dutson, a former member of the Sale Agricultural High School Advisory
Council, who wrote to Tate in 1917 pointing out that the school farm
was inefficient due to the lack of care and the antiquated methods
used. Given such contrasts, it is difficult not to believe that
when praise was given to the farms by outside bodies and individuals,
they were looking at those aspects that were not the most important

81. Minutes of the Wangaratta Advisory Council, loc.cit., 15 March
1915, p.83.
82. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, no.1918/781, 5 August 1918.
83. Ibid., Sale High School, no.1917/7942, 13 October 1917.
ones. They were, after all, on guided tours in all probability, and may have only been shown what the administrators wanted them to see. There were plenty of compliments in the early days of the schools. As has already been noted, Tate made constant reference to the comments of the visiting Scottish Agricultural Commission when it praised the Ballarat school on its agricultural education in 1910. The same school was also praised in 1912 by a Mr. Johnson, Professor of Agriculture at Wisconsin State College, and in 1913 Sir H. Rider Haggard stated that one of the two things in Australia that had impressed him most of all was the "splendid Agricultural Education given to students at the Ballarat Agricultural High School". 84

Local people also sent letters, many of them in response to a directive from Tate to the headmasters to solicit reactions to the course in 1910. While praising the course, T. Holland of Flinders noted that not everyone shared the enthusiasm expressed by the likes of Rider Haggard, Johnson and the Scots. Some of those closer to home were not so convinced and, as he pointed out, the daily newspapers had contained criticisms of the teaching at the Ballarat school "made by one or two of the Ballarat Councillors". 85 It is also significant that, of the letters sent to Tate by the headmasters, not one was critical of the course. When one looks at the plentiful evidence to suggest that considerable criticism did in fact exist, is it not plausible to argue that those headmasters probably screened out the critical items before passing the letters on to Tate? After all, criticism of the school was criticism of them, and they may have been reluctant to show such to their chief

84. Quoted in Cotton, op.cit., p.43.
85. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, no.1910/9069, 1 July 1910.
administrator.

The full agricultural courses seem to have faded out when agriculture became a compulsory subject for all country boys in the new Intermediate Examination in 1916. The farms, however, lingered on in the main until the late 1920s or early 1930s. The reasons for this can be attributed to the efforts of the few dedicated local people on the school councils. Adamson records a special meeting between the Leonpatha school council and Tate and Chief Inspector Hansen in 1917, held in an attempt to save the school farm. The department had been threatening to sell it because of the lack of students, and the council made a great effort to retain it. While this meeting is significant because Tate, who had vociferously defended the country bias on public platforms in the past, and would do so again in the future, made no retort whatsoever to the stating of a few home truths about the poor future of the agricultural students by Councillor Russell, it is also, in all probability, one of many such meetings which convinced Hansen that the farms had to be retained. As he wrote to the minister in 1916,

In close the farms will, in my opinion, constitute a serious breach of faith with the people of the localities who raised money for their establishment; it is further a breach of a trust which the department holds for the education of the present and future generations. Closing down can be justified only if they are an undue burden on the State in the present time of financial strain and in view of the limited number of pupils taking the full agricultural course.

The department did publicly attempt, probably in politically guided efforts to placate the country interests, to belatedly


87. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, Report on agricultural high school farms, nn., 7 December 1916.
advertise the course, publishing the letters of praise from farmers and, at one stage, even attempting to use a scare tactic by comparing Australia's level of agricultural development with that of "our enemy, the unspeakable Turk". However, it did not invite many responses, for the enrolments continued to decline and, in 1917, two letters in the Leongatha Star summed up the opinions of many country people as to the real motives of Tate and his department. Writing from Ruby at the end of October, and providing evidence yet again of the perpetual generation gap, "A Common Cocky" commented:

There are people in Gippsland who are not absolutely ignorant or totally blind, as they can see what this High School fad is leading to by making country boys and girls dissatisfied, restless, conceited and insolent by teachers flattering their vanity sufficient to cram them to pass the Public Service examinations. When all the boys in the High School are in the Public Service, and all the girls are school teachers, so-called, fattening on their parents and the country as permanent parasites, who is going to replace them in country pursuits?... High Schools or young ladies' seminaries are stuffing and cramming our boys and girls for positions in towns and cities. Farmers have long ago summed up the costly uselessness of the agricultural part of the High School.

Three weeks later, another correspondent supported this view, saying that the agricultural high school had been

...foisted upon the farmers, who desired a practical agricultural college for their sons and daughters (not a young ladies' seminary for the practice of the "fads of Mr. Tate", and the play toys for the Department officers or a fancy education of 'Igh society - these are the opinions of district farmers).

Writing in despair to Tate in 1918, after the word "agricultural" had been omitted from the official title of the school, J.H. Refshauge

89. Ibid., vol.xv, no.7, 20 July 1915, p.304.
90. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Warragul High School, nn., 7 November 1917.
91. Quoted in Adamson, op.cit., p.91.
of Ballarat put the finishing touches to the criticism of the agricultural course in saying that

I have done all that is possible to encourage the agricultural side, and have come to the conclusion that the failure is due probably more to economic than to any other causes. There is at present apparently a "dead-end" for the boy who takes up the agricultural course, unless his parents are in a position to provide him with a farm. In some cases parents, who will eventually place their sons upon land, desire only the theory and science of agriculture to be taught, and look upon the teaching of farm work such as ploughing etc. as time lost to the study of more important phases of agriculture.92

That Frank Tate had had to maintain the facade of the agricultural high school until a date as late as 1918 was primarily due, as has been noted, to the continued influence of the rural lobby. In 1909, he had felt that his hand was strong enough for him to make a full-scale move into the arena of secondary education, but he obviously underestimated the strength of the forces against him. The Education Enabling Act of 1910 was his first move to establish general high schools, and also his first move to eradicate the concept of the agricultural high school. The fact that the final draft of the bill was a much weakened version of his original intentions probably meant that the existing agricultural courses were given a reprieve. The account of this follows next.

92. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, no.1918/781, 5 August 1918.
CHAPTER SEVEN: FRANK TATE'S PURPOSE

AND THE 1910 EDUCATION ACT

The State must, in its own defence, assume this obligation. There is no more reason why higher education should be a matter for private concern and private enterprise, than our defence scheme should, as in olden times, revert to private enterprise.

Frank Tate, 1908.*

By allowing the establishment of district high schools and higher elementary schools, the Education Act of 1910 was to further, although not completely cover, the designs of Frank Tate to create a full system of State secondary education. As soon as this Act had been passed, Tate began to phase out the concept of the agricultural high school. In 1911, he wrote that "an interesting experiment was tried in 1907 by the opening of agricultural high schools. At present, there are nine agricultural high schools in existence, and it would be well for the present to call a halt, and establish no others until these have proved successful".¹

For Tate, the story of the 1910 Act was one of frustrated ambitions. The final Bill was a much weaker version of the initial one presented in 1909, and it restricted Tate's freedom to establish the system that he wanted. When he drafted the original version - and there is little doubt that he was the one who drafted it - he was attempting to bring to fruition a policy that he began when he added student teachers and scholarship holders to the Melbourne Continuation School, and continuation sectors to the agricultural high schools. That he was foiled in


this attempt is evidenced by the continued emphasis placed in the
Act upon the provision of vocational education that did not openly
compete with independent school interests, and by Tate's and
Minister Billson's acceptance of obligations made before the 1910
Act was passed to establish agricultural high schools.* Even before
1910, however, Tate appears to have attempted to avoid establishing
agricultural high schools. This is best illustrated by a study of
the puzzling cases of the Ballarat and Bendigo Continuation Schools.

The cases are puzzling because of their incompleteness. In a
parallel move, but with very little publicity, Tate opened the two
institutions along with the Sale and Warrnambool Agricultural High
Schools in 1907. The only mention of them in Parliament before they
opened came in 1906 when Sachse, the minister at the time, said that
"the Government contemplate establishing continuation schools at
Ballarat and Bendigo, for the purpose of training pupils to become
teachers in the State school service".² The subsequent history of
these two schools - the one at Ballarat became an agricultural high
school in 1910 - is interesting, inasmuch as it provides evidence to
suggest that, in one case at least, the three thousand pound grant
for agricultural high schools was utilized in order to provide
suitable premises for an overcrowded school in a time of severe
financial restrictions; even then, it was used reluctantly.

The case of Bendigo is even more puzzling than that of Ballarat
because it did not become an agricultural high school. It does not
seem to be widely known that, like the Ballarat school, there were
plans to convert it into an agricultural high school very soon after
it was opened. However, the question of who made this suggestion is

* The Leongatha Agricultural High School, for example, was not
opened until 1912.

open to conjecture (it is possible that those people of Bendigo who were interested in having an agricultural institution were deluded into thinking that it would be a college, along the lines of Dookie and Longerenong, rather than a high school). The activities of the Education Department seem to suggest that it was reluctant to see the school turned into an agricultural high school. In 1907, District inspector W. Parks revealed evidence of the intention when he reported on the suitability of the building that housed the continuation school, noting that "the general design of the building is admirable", and, regarding the proposition of turning it into an agricultural high school, he added that "by the addition of two rooms, a Chemistry Laboratory and a classroom, it is possible to provide all the accommodation necessary for many years. Such rooms could easily be added to the rear of the present building". Clearly, the accommodation situation at Bendigo was quite comfortable. As Sacke said in 1907, "at Bendigo the Government had only to alter an existing Government building which had been closed for a number of years. He thought it was the old Police court. A slight alteration in the building was all that was necessary, and it had been converted into a first-class place for a school..."

However, when the question of actually turning this institution into an agricultural high school arose, there seemed to be a lack of finance. In the Legislative Council, while discussing the sums allotted to the various schools under the agricultural grant, D.

3. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Bendigo High School, no.1907/12508, 13 September 1907.
4. Ibid.
Melville commented that, while Warrnambool was receiving £1,354, "poor Bendigo" was only getting £1266 and this despite the fact that, as A. Hicks pointed out, the Bendigo City Council alone had promised £500 towards the local share of the cost of the school.7 The government, it seemed, was happy with the Bendigo situation, and there was no need to build a new school which would become an agricultural high school.

Despite the discouragement, the interested members of the local community went ahead and tried to have their "agricultural college" established. In 1908 the Bendigo advertiser, reporting on the proposal to establish such an institution at White Hills, commented that "the Premier was induced to visit the site, and overtures were made to him, in which it was promised that the people of the district would contribute a proportion of the expense if the Government also made a grant."8 In fact, the council's enthusiasm seemed to grow, for it was prepared to offer even more than it had in the previous year. Scathing at the suggestion (and obviously very peeved), the Director of the Bendigo School of Mines, Donald Clark,* reported to his school council:

I beg to formally bring under your notice the cessation of a scholarship grant from the City Council. As a comparative stranger here, I was very much struck by the contrast of refusing a small grant to this Institution and the advocacy of establishing a College at a cost of £10,000 on the deserted diggings near White Hills. I had the pleasure of hearing the Mayororate on the advantages of teaching the youth of Bendigo to emulate the example of skilled nations who grow tomatoes and certain fruits on

* Later to become Chief Inspector of Technical Schools and establish the junior technical schools.

6. Ibid., p.322.
7. Ibid., p.323.
8. 23 May 1908.
what was considered worthless soil. Considering
that with the aid of adjoining shires the Council
offered to raise £3000 and refuses a modest grant
of £50 in order to help some deserving mining
students, one would think that Bendigo as a mining
centre had reached its decadent days, and that its
salvation depended upon the growth of tomatoes and
kindred products. 9

However, in the space of three months, from the time that Clark
wrote his comment in February to May, a great change came over the
mayor, if not the rest of the city council. This period was pun-
cinated by a visit from Inspector L. Betheras in April to
specifically discuss the matter of the agricultural high school.

From the reports in the Bendigo advertiser and the Bendigo independent, 10
it seems that Betheras' main purpose was not to encourage the local
people to establish an agricultural high school, but to point out
that they could not have an agricultural college without first having
the former. Something more than this may have been said in con-
confidence by Betheras for, by May, the mayor had changed his tune. At
a council meeting in that month, according to the Bendigo advertiser,
"the Mayor...said he had received so much opposition from people from
whom he expected assistance that he was almost disheartened". 11 He
then intimated that other matters, for example a cross-country railway,
were more important, and it was moved and carried to shelve the
issue—permanently, as it turned out.

One wonders to whom the mayor was referring when he talked about
those presenting opposition. The figure of Betheras, the depart-
mental representative, seems to loom large; and there is other
evidence of the department refusing to promote the concept of the

9. Reports of the Director of the Bendigo School of Mines 1907-11,
   17 February 1908, p.56 (copy on microfilm held at the Education
   Library, University of Melbourne).
10. 12 April 1908.
11. 23 May 1908.
agricultural high school in a manner that would seem acceptable for people who believed in it. Tate himself, to use the best example, is reported as saying, when visiting Shepparton in 1907 to discuss the establishment of a secondary school there, that "he was not there to advocate the establishment of an agricultural high school at Shepparton, but rather to clear up any doubts in regard to it".12 This was a decidedly lukewarm attitude to take, and Tate expressed it on more than one occasion.

In 1911, T. Langdon, MLA, told Billson, the Minister of Public Instruction, that Tate took two and a half years to visit Donald and report on an application for an agricultural high school made by that municipality in April, 1909. When he finally did get there, he is reported to have said that, "judging by the departmental experience in other centres, some difficulty would be found in obtaining the necessary number of pupils, as the high schools were not availed of by the farming community as they should be...The Minister of Public Instruction was very cautious about taking on new propositions".13 Tate was reported as having also expressed an opinion that an agricultural high school would not be granted to Donald, and when asked about this, Billson replied that "nothing has been said, either by the Director or myself, which would convey the impression that the Education Department considers that the high schools are failures...I am not aware that the Director of Education has expressed the opinion that an agricultural high school will not be granted to Donald".14

This is strange, to say the least. While Billson may well have

12. Shepparton news, 5 March 1907.
had to adopt the approach that he did in order to once again placate the country interests, Tate's attitude, for one supposedly keen to open agricultural high schools, is decidedly odd. Did he, in 1909, believe that he was in striking distance of his objective of district high schools, and therefore deliberately attempt to dissuade those wanting agricultural high schools until he was in a position to offer them an ordinary high school? This may well have been the case, for he also seemed to attempt to make agricultural high schools financially unattractive. In 1911, R.S.H. Abbott noted in the Legislative Council that, in return for a loan from the government to buy its farm, the Shepparton school was being charged four per cent interest. Abbott "desired to enter the strongest protest he possibly could against the methods of the Education Department, particularly the Director of Education, in practically enforcing local taxation outside of any Act of Parliament on the people in country districts in connexion with the establishment and promotion of secondary education". 15 While Abbott did not specifically lay the charge, it could be said that Tate was deliberately trying to discourage other centres from applying for agricultural high schools by making things difficult for those which had. He also made them sound financially unattractive. Abbott later quoted from a circular issued at Beechworth, which stated that Tate had pointed out to the residents of that town that if they wanted an agricultural high school, they would have to pay about £1500, whereas a district high school would cost them about £750—only half as much. 16

* The question of money being charged for the establishment of district high schools is considered more fully later in this chapter.

16. Ibid., p.447.
Whatever the case, the Bendigo Continuation School did not become an agricultural high school, despite the fact that, by 1910, it had outgrown its physical accommodation. In that year, the headmaster, J. King, reported that the old Supreme Court building, which had been the location of the school, "at first proved fairly suitable; but the school has now quite outgrown the building, and, this year, we have been forced to seek extra room at the school of mines". However, by 1910, Tate had no need to make the school into an agricultural high school in order to obtain a new building - the new law enabled him to call it a district high school, and the Bendigo Continuation School became the Bendigo High School.

The situation at the sister school in Ballarat, however, was, from the start, far more unsatisfactory, and it may have been this factor which led to the utilization of the agricultural grant. When it opened in 1907 the school did not even have a building that it could call its own. In June of that year District Inspector Jackson wrote to the department, saying that "it is not without great inconvenience to the Ballarat West Technical Art School that the Continuation School is being temporarily carried on there", and he recommended that improvements be made to State School no.33 as soon as possible so that the continuation school could be shifted there. The school moved to that spot - adjoining the Dana Street State School - soon after. However, it quickly grew, and the buildings soon became inadequate. As the new headmaster, J.H. Refshauge, commented in 1911, "the conditions before the new building was occupied were most unsuitable for effective teaching, as 250

18. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, nn., 13 June 1907.
students were assembled in a building with a capacity for 150. Had it not been for the kindness of Mr. Hardy, the head teacher of the Dana-street School, in placing at my disposal one of the rooms of his school, it would have been impossible to have carried on the teaching".

Clearly, the accommodation situation was desperate, and buildings were urgently needed. Evidence suggests that planning for an agricultural high school began as soon as the continuation school was conceived in 1906 (in reply to a request in 1908 from J.B. Graham of Mornington Junction as to when the agricultural high school would be established at Ballarat, a departmental official had written "beginning of 1909"). However, even then, a great amount of procrastination occurred - far more, it would seem, than with the other agricultural high schools, and the Ballarat institution did not open until April 1910. From the start, there was inordinate delay in the commencement of construction of the new school building in October, 1908. The Ballarat Star reflected local frustration over this:

In the case of the local project there has been unaccountable delay. Nearly two years have elapsed since all preliminary arrangements were satisfactorily effected between the Government and the City Council, and a considerable time has passed since intimation was received that the plans and specifications for the college building had been prepared. Any modifications of these that may be required should occupy but little time, and it is difficult to conceive of any adequate reason for delaying work in connection with which there has been such inordinate procrastination.


20. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, Ballarat High School, nn., 20 July 1908.

21. 7 October 1908.
It is pure conjecture to say that Tate and the department were deliberately dilatory on this issue (until they could delay it no further and local pressure forced their hand), hoping that, as more time went by, the chances of the tabling of a new bill allowing further expansion of State secondary education, thus eliminating the need to make it an agricultural high school, would increase. However, the evidence does not discount this view. If we look at the situation regarding the Shepparton and Wangaratta schools, we see that the construction of their buildings took a much shorter time. The building of the Ballarat school, if we are to accept the statement of the Ballarat Star, took three years from the time that arrangements were made until the time that it opened in 1910.* In both cases, the Shepparton and Wangaratta buildings were constructed in nine months, from the time that a private design by Shepparton architect J.A.G. Clarke was accepted by the department in an effort to cut costs in August 1908 to their opening date on 20 April 1909. Clearly, something was amiss in the case of the Ballarat building, and an entirely satisfactory answer which exonerates Tate and his department from any charge of deliberate delay has yet to be presented.

A similarly strange situation occurred at Sale as well. When the school was opened in 1907, it was housed in the local mechanics' institute building, the trustees of which granted the use of certain rooms without charge. By 1914, however, according to J.W. McLachlan, MLA, a conflict had been going on for some "considerable time" between those trustees and the Education Department over the future

* There is an element of tragedy in the Ballarat story, for the building which took so long to eventuate was destroyed by fire only five years after its opening, and many of the early records were destroyed along with it (Ballarat High School magazine, December 1916, p.1).

occupancy of the building. Melachlan quoted the Gippsland Times as commenting that "the accommodation is...altogether inadequate, and does not comply with Board of Health regulations. At times classes have to be held in the passageways". The article went on to note that the trustees were not satisfied with this, and were intending to terminate the tenancy agreement. The department had agreed to purchase the whole building for school use, but had not ratified the undertaking, and the tenancy agreement was subsequently terminated. The newspaper laid the blame for the problem squarely at the feet of the Education Department, saying that "it was only the Department's fault it had not been settled months before".

Tate and his fellow officers may have been procrastinating because the diversion of funds into the war effort meant that little was available for school purchases. This possibility was not raised, however, by T. Livingston, the Minister for Public Instruction, when replying to Melachlan. Alternatively, it may have been the case that the department did not want the old building, but if it chose to build a new one at that stage it would have to be based upon the plans of an agricultural high school, and therefore the department agreed to buy the old building in an attempt to delay the commencement of a new school building until such time as the political situation allowed it to do away with the full agricultural sector and establish a district high school - which is what eventually occurred. Evidence to support this contention is provided by a report of a deputation from Sale visiting Minister Billson in 1912, asking for a new building. In denying their request, Billson was reported as saying that this was because "the institutions had so

24. Ibid., p.172.
far failed to justify their existence as Agricultural High Schools". 25 Two points of significance arise from this report. First, if the school was considered to be a failure, why did the department agree to buy the mechanics' institute building? The purchase makes sense if the above interpretation is given to it. Secondly, in admitting the failure of the schools, Billson had gone further than he was willing to do a year earlier, when he refused to endorse Tate's reported statement on the schools at Donald (see above page 109), and his action also suggested that the government had little desire to maintain the existing agricultural sectors in the schools.

Certainly, Tate's activities in connection with what was to become the 1910 Education Act suggest that he probably had the same thoughts. When the Ballarat Agricultural High school finally opened in 1910, the final version of the Bill had already been drafted. However, as was stated at the beginning of this chapter, it did not go as far as Tate originally planned. The accepted draft of the Bill enabled him to establish district high schools and higher elementary schools, but the emphasis upon a vocational orientation was still there. As Billson said when presenting the final draft, "what was wanted was a system of intermediate, higher-elementary or secondary schools (call them what you will) which would continue the education of boys and girls beyond the age of 14 and fit them for practical work or further technical instruction". 26 As Rivkah Mathews puts it, the courses of study in the schools

...were not rigidly prescribed: in one area only was there firm legislative provision. Every district high school was to provide for the teaching of science and of the subjects involved

25. Reported in Shepparton news, 6 August 1912.
In manual training, including workshop practice, and, where girls were taught, for practical and theoretical instruction in domestic arts. In agricultural localities the course of study was to include a practical course in experimental agriculture at a school farm. Further, the Act directed that any course of study could be varied so as to provide a theoretical and practical training in subjects bearing on the individual requirements of the locality.

...The 1910 Act was hardly the stuff that liberal dreams were made of.\(^{27}\)

But if this Act was not very liberal, it was not Tate's fault. Under the pressure of interests representing rural areas and the independent schools, and in a situation where the press seems to have played an important, if rather negative, role, he had to modify a draft Bill that was, in the first instance, far-reaching in its reforms and which would, if passed, have allowed Tate to establish a full system of State district high schools, both in the city and in the country. That it was not passed meant that he was obliged to maintain the pretense. The existing agricultural high schools, although called district high schools, had to continue to offer the full agricultural course; emphasis had to be placed upon the technical as opposed to the general courses, and most of the district high schools had to be established in the rural areas.\(^*\)

The first draft Bill was introduced to the Legislative Assembly in 1909. In March of that year, two months after he had become the Minister of Public Instruction, Billson had foreshadowed the Bill's intentions when he commented that "the State had neglected part of its duty, and was now going to make up for its neglect. The distinct and definite policy of the Government was to enter somewhat exten-

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\(^*\) As a result, even by 1920, of the thirty State secondary schools in Victoria, twenty-five were located outside the metropolitan area.

sively on secondary education". The details of the first draft which were omitted from the final one are quite fascinating in their implications. First and foremost, there was a definite distinction made between "higher education" and "technical education". The former was to include a progressive course of general education suitable for young persons of not less than twelve years of age and preparatory to technical or university education". Clearly, if this had been accepted, it would have legalized Tate's general culture course from grade seven to grade twelve level, enabled him to by-pass the vocational dictum, and thus place the State schools in direct and open competition with the independent schools.

In addition to this, and, as far as this thesis is concerned, most importantly, the original draft allowed for the establishment of district high schools on a large scale. They could be proclaimed by the Governor in Council and, in order to circumvent the restrictions placed by financial limitations upon the number of district high schools that could be established, Tate included a clause which said that "a district high school may be conducted in the same building or group of buildings as any State school".

When the final draft of the Bill appeared it had been modified, and the Governor in Council could proclaim not district high schools but higher elementary schools, which only provided courses to grade ten level, and which could be and generally were added to existing State schools. As their title implied, they were extensions of the elementary schools in the image of the Fink Commission's


29. Draft Education Bill: Bills introduced into the Legislative Assembly and proceedings thereon during second session 1909; Melbourne [1910?], p.930.

30. Ibid., p.934.
recommendation, and their courses were necessarily of a more practically-oriented nature than the general culture course desired by Tate in his high schools. Even more significantly, a clause had been added which effectively limited the establishment of district high schools to areas where the adequate provision of secondary education had been proven not to exist, and where fifty qualified pupils, whose parents had expressed in writing their intention to enrol them at such an institution, had been guaranteed. 31

That the independent school interests had pressured the government on this point seems obvious, and their influence also led to further amendments. For example, both drafts of the Bill allowed for the establishment of a council of public education, composed of representatives of the different areas of education, to oversee educational policy in Victoria. Part of this body's activities was the registration of teachers and schools, and Tate originally worded the regulation in such a way that it was possible for such a registration committee to be dominated by departmental officials - with obvious implications for some of the weaker independent schools if these officials thought along the same lines as their director! In the revised draft, a clause was included ensuring that the number of departmental representatives could not exceed the number of registered (independent) school representatives. 32 Again, as a sop to the latter, the government added a section allowing for the possible purchase of buildings and employment of teachers of registered schools forced to close as a result of the direct competition from a State high school - the original draft possessed nothing like this.

31. /State of Victoria/ 7 1911, Act No.2301.
32. Ibid.
There is one other point about Tate's original draft that is worthy of mention. The first document presented to Parliament was far-reaching in its attempts to decentralize power from the department's head office in Melbourne. Tate planned to have any area that was deemed to be in need of higher or technical education declared a higher education district, and a committee established in that district was to have considerable powers. Such a body, to comprise nine to fifteen members, not less than one-third of whom were to be municipal representatives, was to be responsible for such aspects as establishing the educational needs of the district, aiding the establishment of suitable schools, administering funds, appointing and removing officers and teachers, establishing scholarships and establishing, furnishing and equipping school libraries and museums. Had this been passed, these higher education committees would have wielded significant control, and Victoria after 1910 may have seen a decentralization of educational responsibility, the like of which is only now being envisaged with the regionalization concept and the revised school councils policy.

Just why Tate planned such a radical change is open to speculation. It is pure conjecture to say that he did it in an attempt to rationalize the situation in education by taking the control of school policy away from the politicians and putting it into the hands of those who were best able to determine what form their education should take - the people who were going to benefit from it (and their support of the continuation sectors as opposed to the agricultural sectors of the agricultural high schools suggested what form these new schools were likely to take if they controlled them) - but it may well have been the case, and it warrants a more detailed

investigation at a later time.

As it was, many verbal attacks were made upon the first draft of the Bill, so much so that the government was forced to suspend debate upon it and call for public submissions which, if the reports in the press are a good indication, were many in number. The press seemed to take the issue up very keenly. The *Bondigo Advertiser* reflected the flavour of much of the opposition to the Bill when it commented that it

...is ostensibly one to promote the spread of technical education... But there is another purpose that looms largely throughout. A careful reader, who closely studies the clauses, will come to no other conclusion than that the bill is mainly designed to obtain the control of all education. Technical education is only one of the side issues, although it is cleverly put forward as the stalking horse. Once this bill becomes law, all education within the State of Victoria will pass into the hands of the Education Department.

...Are [the district high schools] to be confined to preparation for technical work? "Certainly not. They will undertake the functions and perform the work of schools now in existence, and in very much the same way, but at an infinitely greater cost."34

Few, it seems, were under any illusion as to the role of Tate in the drafting of the Bill. The same newspaper, when discussing it, said that it "appears the endeavour of a man to put his pet ideas into practice under the cloak of doing public good".35 It surely was not referring to Gillson, who, when the comment was made, had held the education portfolio for only seven months. The *Ballarat Star* openly accused Tate, commenting that

To hasten slowly will scarcely appeal to an enthusiast such as the Director of Education, who would reach the ideal ("primary education compulsory for all, intermediate and secondary education available for all") by snatching at it. Particularly is this so in relation to the suggested incursion of the State into the region of secondary education.

34. 2 October 1909.
35. Ibid., 4 August 1909.
Private secondary schools are anathema to Mr. Tate, who regards "vested interests" as the enemy of educational progress.\textsuperscript{36}

The Bill was eventually revised, along the lines already mentioned, and the suggestion of the higher education districts and committees was completely omitted, the powers of the substitute school committees being primarily confined to the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds. In a report on the revised Bill in May, 1910, the \textit{Bendigo advertiser} noted that its object is to establish what can be termed intermediate schools on the Scotch principle. It has been recognized that it is not advisable to have a large expenditure on technical schools without sufficient pupils being able to attend these. The intermediate schools will, in effect, be easy steps from the primary schools to the technical schools.\textsuperscript{37}

The interests calling for conservatism in educational policy had obviously had a considerable victory. In a leader in July of that year, possibly making a sarcastic aside on Tate's role in the affair, the same newspaper commented that

one marvellous feature about the discarded measure is that it seemed to be drawn up in antagonism to secondary education as existent here for fifty years. The assumption was made at the outset that this was wholly bad, and that the only way to set things right was to establish a secondary system of education without any consideration of what had gone before. That can only be characterized as a very narrow view...This is not merely a simple sum, to be solved by a clever teacher on familiar lines.\textsuperscript{38}

From the various comments, the purpose of Tate's action seems obvious. The time was now ripe, he considered, for the State to move into the area of secondary education legally and on a large scale. Perhaps he made an error of judgement here, as the degree of opposition to the first draft suggests, and he had to limit his

\textsuperscript{36} 2 August 1909.  
\textsuperscript{37} 13 May 1910.  
\textsuperscript{38} 2 July 1910.
objectives further than he had at first imagined. The future of the existing continuation and agricultural high schools was clear - while retaining their already established functions, they would become district high schools and thus, according to the Bendigo advertiser, would be "secondary schools in name and reality, instead of schools where, under the pretext of training teachers and farmers, cheap secondary education is given at public cost." 39 Tate could offer general culture courses in these schools, but the emphasis upon the practical aspect was to remain, and we see this reflected in the report of the minister when, in discussing the preparation of the course of study for the district high schools and higher elementary schools, it was written that "an endeavour was made to frame a thoroughly practical syllabus". 40 The course of study decided upon was:

...a common course for all pupils, except those in industrial courses. These - (1) a preparatory professional course for pupils intending to proceed to university studies, to enter the teaching profession, or to obtain a sound general education; (2) an agricultural course to be taken in agricultural high schools; (3) a commercial course for pupils desirous of entering upon commercial pursuits; and (4) a domestic arts course, designed to give girls a thorough training in domestic duties and in the management of the home, as well as a good general education. 41

According to the department, the purposes of the high schools were three in number:

(1) They provide continued education beyond the standard of the primary school for pupils between twelve and eighteen years of age...

(2) Through the industrial course, more particularly, they form a link with the technical schools. It is frequently urged that an insufficient number

39. 4 August 1909.


41. Ibid.
of pupils passes from the high schools to the technical school, and steps are being taken to ensure that pupils desiring to enter on technical or trade pursuits are not diverted from these courses...

(3) The third purpose of the high schools is to link the primary schools with the University. The new system of scholarships provides a broad avenue by which pupils may pass free of expense from the elementary schools through the high schools to the University on the one hand, or to higher technical schools, on the other. 42

However, limited as he was by the final Act and the subsequent regulations, Tate did see the schools function as he desired and, to this extent, the conservative victory in 1910 was a pyrrhic one. Just as the majority of agricultural high school students before 1910 chose to undertake the general education course on the continuation side in preference to the vocational agriculture course, so most of the pupils attending the district high schools after 1912 opted for the non-vocational course, and the main function of the schools became an academic one (see Appendix 12).

That the schools did not fulfill the technical preparatory function assigned to them is evidenced, according to Mathews, 43 by the establishment of the junior technical schools in 1912. The concept of these practically-oriented schools was in total opposition to Tate’s educational philosophy. However, to a great extent, he was involved with his own petard, and could do little about it. He could not publicly oppose them because, to have done so, would have been to admit to his deception with regard to the purpose of the high schools, and the strong-willed Donald Clark was allowed to push the issue and establish the junior technical schools. While revealing that he was not sure about the value of a

42. Ibid., 1915, vol.2, no.13 (Report...for the year 1913-14), p.38.
totally university-oriented curriculum for those not intending to go on to university, Tate recognised the trend of the schools towards academia, and as much as condoned it when he wrote:

State high schools...soon adopted the outlook and organization of the existing independent schools. In some ways this was an excellent thing; for these older schools had a community life and spirit worthy of imitation. Whether the new high schools should have accepted so readily the close orientation towards the universities and a curriculum conditioned so materially by future university requirements is not so readily answered. They contained a greater proportion of pupils not likely to enter the university, and for them, as for a similar constituency in the older schools, a different curriculum designed to prepare them to take their place effectively in a rapidly changing world would have been more appropriate...there is abundant opportunity to cut out from the details of subjects much dead wood, and to introduce a treatment of social and economic questions which the youngsters must soon be called upon to face as citizens.\(^44\)

This view is similar to that advanced by those arguing for an alternative to the Higher School Certificate course in today's educational scene, and it is a far cry from the advocacy of a narrowly vocational course, such as that offered at the agricultural high schools. As has already been noted in chapter five, in no publication after 1911 do we find Tate recommending the retention or re-introduction of that course in schools in Victoria. By all means give a less academic flavour to the curriculum, he argued, but do not sacrifice the general nature of the education for it - "what is needed is a greater infusion of humane and liberal subjects in the technical school courses, and in the high schools a more direct connection between the work of the classroom and the practical problems of the outside world".\(^45\)

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44. "Some problems of administration" in P.R. Cole (ed.), The education of the adolescent in Australia, Melbourne, 1935, p.27.

45. Ibid., p.31.
It was only very late in his career (he retired in 1928) that Frank Tate was able to see anything like the State-wide system of secondary schools which he had so desired. It has already been noted that city schools advocated by him in the 1920s did not finally appear until after 1950. After the 1910 Act, he was still severely limited by the amount of money available, apart from the pressure of conservative interests. Speaking on that Act, D.C. McGrath, MIA, pointed out the financial limitations placed upon it when he said that "I recognize that as a whole the Bill means little, for there is no obligation on the Minister to carry out what may be decided upon. The Minister will be dependent upon the money which he can get from the Treasurer". Tate lamented this sad lack of funds when, writing in retirement, he commented:

Our educational shortcomings in Australia do not result from our inability to devise suitable types of secondary schools, but from our failure to arouse a sufficiently insistent demand for them to secure action by the central government to establish them in sufficient numbers. In some States, notably in Victoria, the provision of facilities for higher education has been conditioned by the willingness of localities to make a voluntary contribution towards the initial cost of buildings and site.

And this was not only the case with the agricultural high schools. We also find him asking for local donations for district high schools in 1911 (see above page 110), despite the fact that the new Act mentioned nothing about the need for them. This lack of finance, which was aggravated by the war effort, was also responsible for the establishment of the Melbourne central schools in 1916 to relieve the pressure on the existing high schools. These schools were not mentioned in the 1910 Act. As Inch has commented,

47. "Some problems of administration", loc.cit., p.27.
they were cheap because they were simply the existing primary schools with the first two years of secondary school added on, and they dovetailed into the existing secondary system. But they were not what Tate really wanted, and although eighteen of them had been established by 1919, both he and Martin Hansen were still pleading for the establishment of more high schools. 49

Those schools took a long time in coming. The State-wide system, begun on a small and surreptitious scale with the establishment of the continuation schools and agricultural high schools in the first decade of this century, did not reach fruition until more than forty years later, and Tate, the catalyst, who died in 1939, did not live to see his dream fulfilled.

49. Reported in ibid., p.119.
CHAPTER EIGHT: MARTIN HANSEN AND THE FAILURE OF THE AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

The name Agricultural High School should be abolished, and the term District high school used in common for all. The use of the term is misleading, and has been the source of much wrong criticism of the work of the school generally. There appears no adequate reason for using the name Agricultural rather than Secondary or Commercial or Domestic Arts in connection with the high schools. While originally it was hoped that the Agricultural Course would be the most attractive course, experience has shown that the other courses attract the majority of pupils.

Martin Hansen, Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, 1917.*

By 1915, or thereabouts, the failure of the agricultural sectors of the agricultural high schools in Victoria had become an established fact. Many of the reasons for this state of affairs have already been presented in the pages of this thesis and, beginning in 1915, the Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, Martin Hansen, compiled a series of reports presenting the "official" view on these reasons.

Naturally, a condemnation of the roles of Frank Tate and the other officers of the Education Department was not to be found in Hansen's reports, but some of the arguments presented by him are, nevertheless, regret in their own right, and have not yet been considered in this work.

It is ironic that, as the years moved on after 1910, Frank Tate, for reasons unknown, drifted away from the central stage of educational prognostication and was replaced, as the chief apologist for the agricultural high schools, by Martin Hansen. It is ironic because, both before and after he succeeded Tate as Director of Education, Hansen led a movement to do away with early educational specialization, which he regarded as being educationally unsound.

* P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, nn., 14 May 1917.
He was, to use the words of B. Bessant and A.D. Spauld, "imbued with that subtle aura of a liberal education",¹ and he carried out a strong campaign and a running verbal battle with Donald Clark to absorb the junior technical schools into a system of "modern Schools", along the lines of those recommended by the British Nadow Report in 1926, offering a broad range of courses to post-primary pupils — in other words, multi-purpose high schools. Bessant is of the opinion that Hansen put his life and soul into this idea of general secondary education, for he says that, after the new Labor Minister of Public Instruction, John Lemmon, vetoed his scheme in 1930, he was a defeated man. Together with his complete failure to communicate with Lemmon, this veto "was a bitter blow from which he seemed never to recover. He died in office in 1932".²

Thus the concept of the agricultural course would seem to have been anathema to Hansen's educational thinking. However, like his superior fate, he had to sublimate his personal feelings to political realities. While representing the interests of the agricultural high schools, there is evidence to suggest that Hansen had his doubts about the wisdom of their policy of specialization from the age of fourteen. Bessant and Spauld comment that he regarded any attempt to teach technical work to those under fifteen as "premature specialization",³ and in 1915, in discussing the agricultural high schools, he raised the question of the value of such agricultural education when he asked: "Is it the soundest policy to give Agricultural education to boys between the ages of 14 and 16 years concurrent with the continuation of their general education, or would it be

more advisable to postpone Agricultural education until the pupils
have finished their preliminary education and are thus able to
specialize in agriculture purely?".4

However, represent the schools he did, and in doing so he
revealed compassion and appreciation for the feelings of others.
This is evidenced by the human touch in his approach, such as the
time when he argued against the closure of the farms because it could
destroy the faith of those who had worked so hard for their establish-
ment (see above page 101), and his reports on the progress (or lack
of it) of the agricultural sectors were reasoned and free of inven-
tive.

The first of these reports appeared in 1915, and was entitled
"Report on agricultural high schools and farms". It was a sixty-six
page document, which considered the place of agriculture in a system
of national education, the existing schools, causes of the scarcity
of agricultural students, an analysis of the cost of school farms
and the attendance of agricultural students, reports on each farm,
and general conclusions. For the purposes of this chapter we are
mainly concerned with the third item on the agenda - the causes of
the scarcity of pupils - and a list of these also appeared in his
second, shorter report on the farms in 1917.5

The reasons for the farmers' initial lack of support for the
agricultural sides of the schools have already been extensively
discussed in chapters four and five, and will only be mentioned here
to refresh the reader's memory. There was, it will be recalled, a
surfeit of land rather than a lack of it, and, as it was being
farmed extensively for the most part, farmers saw little need to

4. P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Corres-
pondence, High Schools Generally, Report on agricultural high
school farms, nn., 19 June 1915, p.4.
5. Ibid., Report on agricultural high school farms, nn., 14
May 1917.
send their sons to school to learn scientific techniques in agriculture. Moreover, the farmers were contemptuous of courses run by a teaching staff which was generally academic in nature. It has also been noted that the course led, in most cases, to a dead end, with few prospects of employment or higher education for the graduate.

In his report Hansen mentioned other reasons for failure which were not connected with the motives of Tate and the department. One of the main ones was the cost of such an education to the farmer. When the schools first began, the cost of the agricultural course was two guineas per term; eight guineas for a four-term year (which was the norm at that time). At the same time, the cost of the continuation course in the same school was only one pound ten shillings per term, so the agricultural course was less financially attractive than its competitor from the very start.

This was not the main problem, however. The course faced difficulties with regard to its total cost. In stating his reasons for the failure of the agricultural course in 1912, J.H. Refshauge of Ballarat pointed out that "a course at Dookie, or the Hawkesbury, or the Longerenong College costs less than one-fourth of the amount needed for an agricultural high school course". Hansen supported this statement in 1915, totalling the cost of board and tuition for a three-year course at Dookie at seventy-five pounds, and sixty pounds at both Hawkesbury and Longerenong. The problem lay in the incidental costs involved in sending a boy to an agricultural high school. For example, in reference to the Ballarat school, Mr. H.J. Robinson of Dean wrote to the Ballarat Star, commenting that "as

Dean has no railway facilities, the cost of attending Ballarat A.H.S. for a child of this district is not £50,8 but £50 or £60 a year. In 1917, Hansen summed up the whole problem with regard to fees when he wrote that

In most cases the boy must live away from home, and the cost of board, books, clothing, pocket money and travelling amount to from £50 to £60 per annum. The services of the boy on the home farm are valuable, and since the war have become increasingly so. The services in many cases have to be replaced by hired labour, which costs about 100 per annum. The total cost then is about £160 per annum, or £220 for the two years over which the course extends.9

So the poorer farmers often could not afford to send their sons to undertake the agriculture course, even if they so desired, and the wealthier farmers and graziers were more likely to send their children to independent schools in the cities rather than to a State school.

Another reason for failure raised by Hansen was the lack of prospects at the end of the course, and the effects that this knowledge would have had upon the small farmer. The agriculture student had only one real prospect - to go back on to the land. However, if

8. The fee for the agricultural course had been reduced to the level of that for the continuation course in April, 1911, in response to a letter from Headmaster J.H. Braithwaite of Warrnambool, who wrote that "We have a number of boys this year who do not intend to take up farming. They are here for education generally. I am urging such boys to take up the agricultural course and I would be more successful if the fees were uniform." (P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department Files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, no.1911/6010, 4 April 1911).

As well as this, the department had obtained concession travel on trains for pupils going to the schools, but its attitude to further reductions in fees may be gauged by the comment of Inspector A. Fussell who, when it was suggested that the course fees be abolished, said that he did not think that this would increase the numbers of students (Departmental Correspondence, Wangaratta High School, nn., 7 March 1914). He was probably right, but the attitude did nothing to aid the success of the courses, and the fees remained.

9. 3 April 1912.

a small farmer had more than one son, this meant having to set the younger boys up on separate pieces of land if they were to have any chance of making a viable living. This was a costly process, and the attractions of the continuation course were many. As Hansen put it, "the other courses of the school lead to commercial pursuits, University, Teaching Profession, Civil Service, and continue a sound general education preparatory to a specialization. These courses definitely qualify for certain appointments, and consequently are more attractive to both parents and pupils". In many cases, the farmers sent their children to school to give them an education which would get them away from the land. As Hansen commented:

Even when convinced of [the] desirability of higher education, they view it rather as a measure of social training for the girls, and as a means of getting the boys off the land into some other pursuit. Instances are known where parents have interviewed teachers and urged "my son seems to be doing very well at school judging by his reports. I think he is too clever to be a farmer". Consequently they desire to transfer him to another course leading either to one of the professions or to some clerical pursuit. They send their boys to school to be taught other subjects such as a second or third language which not five per cent of them will ever utilize, but when a subject such as Agriculture is proposed, the reply is often "My boy can learn farming at home".

In talking of the costs of sending a boy to do an agriculture course (see above page 131), Hansen mentioned the fact that sending a son away created a labour shortage on the farm. During the war years, a natural labour shortage occurred as a result of men going away to the front and, even if they had so wished, many farmers could not send their sons to school because they needed their manpower on the farm. The whole problem was also aggravated, as Hansen pointed out, by a severe drought which affected Victorian agriculture.

10. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p.7.
during the first two years of the war, and which intensified the
difficulty of obtaining sufficient numbers of agriculture students.

A factor that would most probably have had an influence upon
the numbers of students, but which Hansen did not mention, was the
particular composition of Australian society at that time. Comment
has already been made about Tate's reference to overseas examples of
agricultural education, especially in Denmark and the United States,
and he was either accidentally or deliberately simplifying the issue
when he said that "the scheme for the establishment of Agricultural
High Schools...is capable of being developed along approximately the
same lines in regard to agriculture as the American technical high
schools are in respect to industrial training".\textsuperscript{13} This attitude
totally ignored the different class composition and, more importantly,
class attitudes of Australian society. Any attempt to keep Australians
in the country areas and away from the cities cut across the
Australian belief in social mobility and a career open to talent-
basic elements of a society which believed that at least some Jacks
were as good as their masters. Moreover, one must keep in mind the
fact that, throughout the period under discussion, education beyond
the age of fourteen was still the preserve of the financially better
off and the more ambitious minority of the lower classes. If we
are to use Tate's figures (see above page 32) then, even as late
as 1920, only about fifteen per cent of the State's children aged
between fourteen and eighteen attended any kind of secondary school.

That it is not presumptuous to suggest that these fifteen per
cent were likely to have come from families with strong social
aspirations is evidenced by the failure of the night classes estab-

\textsuperscript{13} Quoted in B. Bessant: "The emergence of State secondary
education" in J. Cleaverley and J. Lawry (eds.), \textit{Australian
education in the twentieth century}, Melbourne, 1972, p.141.
lished under the aegis of the 1910 Act. In an attempt to provide further education for children aged between fourteen and seventeen who had had to leave school early, special night classes were to be provided. However, in both Shepparton and Wangaratta, these classes proved unsuccessful. In the former settlement, more than one attempt was made to get the children into the classrooms. In 1911, after the first effort, the school council chairman, John Sutherland, commented that attendances were poor and were declining, and that a compulsory clause included in the 1910 Act might have to be initiated if the pupils would not attend voluntarily. It seems that they were reluctant, however, to implement that clause, and in February of the following year the night school closed. Attempts to re-instil faith in it elicited only eight responses. In 1914, a second attempt was made to open the school, but no pupils turned up. In Wangaratta, the night school was also reported as being a failure. Clearly, the bulk of the State's youth was not interested in further education at this time - a job could be obtained quite easily without it, and the fifteen per cent who took that education up were not likely to want to stay down on the farm. They would have been aiming at professional careers which required secondary and even tertiary education.

The other reason for the failure of the agriculture sectors needs to be discussed. This was an inherent weakness, one which was alluded to by several observers of the situation, and one that meant that the course was doomed to failure before it was even planned or commenced. Even if we disregard the fact that the secondary school

15. Ibid., 20 February 1912.
16. Ibid., 1 June 1914.
population was composed predominantly of career-motivated children, the agriculture sectors had no chance because they were placed in open competition with general education sectors, and the attractions of the latter over the former have already been discussed elsewhere in this chapter. If the schools had possessed only agricultural sectors, as was originally planned, then they may have had some chance of success, for the poorer parents desiring to give their children a further education would have had little choice but to send them to these schools for an education that was second-best. As soon as Tate added the continuation sectors to them, however, the alternative was provided, and the ambitious minority quickly took advantage of it. The agricultural courses in these schools, which were described very early in their existence as "mongrel things", quickly became the poor cousins and eventually disappeared from the scene. This pattern of events was by no means confined to Victoria. The same situation developed in similar dual purpose schools in other States and other lands which were industrializing and requiring higher educational qualifications for the more skilled careers. Agricultural courses did not present an attractive alternative (for a more detailed consideration of this situation, see Appendix 1).

It would be unfair, however, to complete this thesis without some consideration of the positive aspects of the agricultural high schools. The beneficial work of some of the school farms has already been mentioned, and the agricultural course did have its values for some students. Roy Clydesdale is of the opinion that it did fulfill something for him - at least it taught him how to lay out a vegetable patch properly. But he was not a farmer's son, and one would think that such boys would either know this technique, or could learn it.

at home on the farm. In general the schools were recognized, not
for their efforts in agriculture, but for their influence in providing
further education for the country districts. In his educational
survey of the Warrnambool district I. Cumming recognizes this, and
comments upon Tate's role when he writes that the scheme "did bring
secondary education within the grasp of the rural population and,
furthermore, acted as a sop to the politicians who had a strong
country following in order that they might encourage the expansion of
secondary education generally".\(^{20}\) Maurice Blackburn, a critic of
Tate's tactics, made considerable comment about the schools in
Parliament. Speaking on their attempts to impart successful agricul-
tural techniques, he said:

I believe that it is just as impossible to teach
agriculture at those schools as it was to teach
geometry by the famous method adopted by teachers
at the University at Laputa. When the professors
there had any particularly difficult geometrical
theorem or problem, they first commanded the
students to fast, and then they wrote the problem
or theorem on a thin white cake and gave it to
them to eat.\(^{21}\)

However, Blackburn also commented:

I have not the slightest doubt that they are of no
use as agricultural schools, but they have done,
and are doing, excellent work in the direction so
much desired by the honourable member for Ovens
\(^{22}\) - that is, they are acting as decon-
centralizing factors. I was once a teacher in Sale,
and I remember how what was considered the absence
of permanently decent secondary education in that
town drove people from the surrounding district
to live in Melbourne. Parents who had sons and
daughters old enough to receive secondary education
had to leave the places around Sale because they
could not get a good secondary education for them
there, and they were sure of getting it in
Melbourne. That position has been altered by the
agricultural high school, which is doing good work.\(^{22}\)

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20. An educational survey of the City and Shire of Warrnambool,
22. Ibid., p.3327.
That the agricultural high schools acted as decentralizing factors was in accordance with Frank Tate's plan for the provision of State-wide secondary education. That they provided a narrowly based vocational course, however, was not in accordance with his liberal ideas, and this course, forced upon him by considerations of political and financial expediency, was given only lukewarm support by Tate and his department, and allowed to wither away. It had served its purpose and, after 1910, was no longer needed. The idea of agricultural education for rural boys, to take the words of P.J. Worsnop, "was used, even exploited by Tate as a lever to bring to fruition his view of a national, co-ordinated system under the auspices of his Department, and supported and controlled by the State".  

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

There are two things in my life I'm ashamed of. The first is starting the agricultural high schools without clearly working out what they were to teach.

Frank Tate, c. 1934.*

By 1918, the word "agricultural" had been semi-officially deleted from the titles of the schools (it was officially removed some time in the 1930s), and they became district high schools. The farms lingered on, providing a practice plot for the boys taking agriculture as a subject for their Intermediate Certificate, and it was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that they were finally closed and either reverted into the recreation land whence they came, as in Wangaratta, or were sold, as was the case in Ballarat. Ironically, the fence posts used to enclose the land at Ballarat after it was sold were made as one of the last acts of the school farm.¹

And so the concept of the agricultural high school passed from the Victorian educational scene. Its purpose, primarily political, it had served well, at a time when the realities of limited finance, a rural predilection in Parliament, a backlash against all things urban, and a demand for further vocational education flavoured by an imperial concern for industrial development, dictated the structure and location of any projected State system of post-primary schools.

That Frank Tate felt remorse in later life for the actual form that the agricultural sectors in these schools adopted stands to reason. A man of liberal views in education, who believed in provid-

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¹ H. Cotton: The history of Ballarat high school 1907-1947, Ballarat [1947?], p.44.
ing the opportunity for a secondary education for all, regardless of
wealth or locality, was forced by circumstances to offer a narrowly-
based, heavily vocational course, a course which had little support
from the rural population. Such an action, accompanied as it was by
the necessary verbal support given to the course, would surely play
upon the mind of a man with such views.

That the activities of Tate amounted to deception is evidenced
by the form that the schools took. Beginning with the Melbourne
Continuation School in 1905, Frank Tate manipulated the recommendations
of the Fink Commission and the resultant Act in order to sow the
seeds of the State secondary system that was to be. Within a frame-
work originally recommended to provide more qualified pupils for the
higher technical institutions, he established a training college for
student teachers and a secondary sector for scholarship holders
desiring an education preparatory to university studies. Within a
very short time the two courses became synonymous: the first State
secondary school had been born.

Restricted as he was, Tate was unable to expand the system in
the metropolitan area. The rural interests in Parliament, and the
opposition presented by the independent school interests, strongest
in Melbourne, made sure of this. The country, however - if the
reader will excuse the pun - provided greener pastures. Aided by a
parliamentary grant, he was able to establish vocationally-oriented
post-primary schools in country towns willing to provide specified
finance, land and student numbers. Once again, Tate manipulated
the regulations. The resultant agricultural high schools, the first
two opening in 1907, bore little resemblance to those originally
envisaged by the politicians. They accepted girls as students; they
did not comply with the regulations on local contributions and,
above all, they offered continuation courses for junior teachers and
scholarship holders at Melbourne Continuation School. They were, to all intents and purposes continuation schools with agricultural sectors.

The agricultural course, recommended but not always supported by the Directors of Agriculture and Education, was unsuccessful from the beginning. Facing considerable opposition from local farming interests, it possessed weaknesses that were both inherent and extraneous. Inherently, it suffered because it was too narrow, too vocationally-oriented for children of fourteen years of age. It led to no recognized qualification, at a time when qualifications were beginning to be seen as necessary for entrance to a well-paid job. It did not qualify a pupil for further agricultural study at college or university, and its practical value was questioned because it was often taught by academically-oriented or unqualified teachers and farm managers. Much of what was taught, said the farmers, could probably be taught more cheaply and effectively at home, and if they were going to pay for an education for their children, it was going to be one that opened rather than closed doors for them.

It is highly likely that the agricultural course from the beginning by ensuring that it was unsuccessful and unattractive, then did little to stop the rot that quickly set in. In reality, the Education Department adopted a very lukewarm attitude towards the agricultural course. While dancing to the politicians' tune and funding the values of it, they turned a deaf ear to the complaints of the schools' headmasters. From the beginning, the agricultural sectors were plagued by the lack of finance and equipment. They suffered unqualified teachers and ignorant inspectors, and there was a lack of the human touch at head office, which saw most problems in terms of finance and profitability, rather than in educational ones. As if this were not enough, the agricultural sectors had to compete
unfairly with the continuation course, the attractions of which were many in number. On their own, the agricultural courses may have succeeded. In competition with an academic course, they came a very distant second.

In suffering the consequences of this comparison, the agricultural sectors were not alone. When industrial, commercial and domestic arts courses were established in district high schools along with the agricultural course as a result of the 1910 Education Act, they experienced similar fates. The ambitious minority who were prepared to provide their children with a post-primary education were not intending to restrict their social mobility by limiting their education to a specialization at such an early age. The secondary course led the way to many careers, from which the child could choose once he had finished his secondary education.

Frank Tate attempted to establish his State-wide system of secondary education through the 1910 Education Act. However, he obviously underestimated the degree of opposition to his scheme, and he had to maintain the vocational and rural emphasis until after 1920. His dream was not finally fulfilled until the years after 1950, such was the strength of the forces militating against his ideas. By that time, the agricultural high school was a distant memory.

Late circumvented plans to establish any more soon after the 1910 Act became law and, while retaining the title "agricultural high school" for some time, they performed and were treated in the same manner as district high schools, possessing ever-diminishing numbers of full agricultural students.

The demise of the agricultural high school concept in Victoria was undoubtedly a sad event in the eyes of the few who had wholeheartedly believed in it, and had invested so much time and sweat in an effort to make the schools a success. For Frank Tate and
the members of the Education Department, however, its departure was
un lamented. It had been costly and the money spent upon it could be
better put to use in providing a general secondary education for
children in educationally less well-endowed areas. It had, in effect,
been the important stepping-stone which allowed Tate to move across
the barriers to State involvement in post-primary education. It had
been expensive, it had been unsuccessful, but, in the climate of the
times, it had been necessary. It was not simply an unsuccessful attempt
to transpose foreign educational techniques on to an Australian
foundation, but an integral part of the complex movement for the
establishment of a State system of secondary education in Victoria.
APPENDIX I.

Although mistaken about its origin, A.M. Badcock has effectively summed up the purpose of the agricultural high school as seen by those who first envisaged it. As he points out, the plan "for the establishment of agricultural high schools could be interpreted as [one] to 'freeze' society in its existing mould. It was based on the premiss that in the interests of the nation the farming community should 'stay put' and that education could be designed to effect this objective".¹

Victoria has not been the only place where this approach has been adopted, and several recent studies have indicated that, wherever they are established, dual purpose schools, having a general and a vocational course, are unsuccessful in the latter area. Putting the question of educational ethics aside, the only way for such an intensely vocational course to succeed, in a secondary school, it seems, is by offering it solely, and giving prospective students no choice in the matter.

That this pattern may well be universal, and not confined just to western-style industrialising states, is evidenced by recent studies made by Mr. Bruce Palmer of the University of New England.² He provided material from a study of schools with agricultural courses in the Solomon and New Hebrides Islands. In establishing agricultural courses in rural areas, it was intended in the Pacific islands, as in early twentieth century Victoria, that the school leaver would be agriculturally oriented, the assumed result being that the schools would become "relevant" to the community. However,

as Palmer points out, relevance is dependent upon the perception of the individual, and what is perceived as relevant by the planner need not be perceived in the same manner by the villager. School forms alternative to those of the urban areas may be seen by the villager as the bureaucracy offering a second-rate alternative which denies them opportunities similar to those in the cities. This question of relevance is inherently tied to the problem of the use of the school as an agent of change or, in the case of Victoria, retention or even reversion. Palmer comments that education may be a significant factor in any total plan for development, but it is only one component:

If the educational system is reformed and the other concomitant socio-economic and political aspects of society are not, then the effectiveness of the schools will be diminished. If education is considered by the average Solomon Islander to be an investment can it be expected that he would return to the village and "happily plant coconuts" when the rural areas do not promise status or a secure income?...For education to assist in the development of the nation the "right type" of environment must be created and this means that there has to be a total plan. It is dangerous to assume that because agricultural/vocational subjects are taught in the schools that the village/rural areas will be transformed automatically.

Palmer cites different examples of schools to support his contention. One of them, the Bubana Anglican Girls' School at Gela in the Solomon Islands, was established in the late 1940s with the intention of being "a Melanesian school in a Melanesian setting for Melanesian girls". It centred upon the traditional female activities of growing food and rearing babies. Agriculture was the main activity, but while the pupils learned methods that would help

3. Ibid., p.3.
4. Ibid., p.5.
5. Ibid., p.6.
them to change village techniques, they were not designed to alienate them from the existing rural environment. When this experiment ceased in 1950 it was, according to Palmer, showing all the signs of being successful.

He then contrasts this single purpose school to the area high schools in the New Hebrides which, like the agricultural high schools in Victoria, had two functions. While his example, the Onesua Area High School, is to all intents and purposes preparing its pupils for an agricultural life in a rural area, it also trains teachers, and it is clear that far too many of the pupils, in the eyes of the administration, are opting for the general education provided by the teachers' course, rather than for the agricultural course. Palmer comments that the problem in the Solomons and the New Hebrides, as in early twentieth century Victoria, was that prestige and economic security are associated with white collar employment, not with agricultural pursuits, and he contends that, as is evidenced by the banana school, the villager may accept the alternative school forms only if nothing else is available.

While the example from Melanesia is both relevant and valuable, we do not need to go so far afield for support for the argument, as there is evidence available from Australian experience apart from the Victorian example. E. Bessant has commented that, in the adjacent State of New South Wales, Tate's counterpart, Peter Board, saw the problems associated with agricultural education, and only established one agricultural high school, at Hurlstone in 1906.

6. Ibid., p.10.
7. Ibid., p.4.
It had the same type of agricultural course as those in Victoria, but "being residential and specifically devoted to the teaching of agriculture, it was to prove much more successful than its Victorian counterparts". When Board was reluctantly pressured to add agricultural courses to some high and district schools in 1916, they met with the same lack of popularity and interest as in Victoria. Again, in 1923, political considerations led to the establishment of rural schools in some of the superior public schools, and they were also failures. The element of comparison was there, and the agricultural sectors ranked a distant second in the popularity stakes.

Perhaps the best examples of successful agricultural schools in Australia - successful because they concentrated exclusively upon agricultural education - were the area schools in Tasmania. Their origins were similar to those of the Victorian schools, but their outcome was radically different. The schools have been the subject of a study made by D.V. Selth of the Canberra Church of England Girls' Grammar School. He comments that they were based upon a suggestion made by the State's Director of Education, G.V. Brooks, after a world tour in 1935, and one of the reasons for their success was the fact that, unlike the situation in Victoria in 1907, the political, economic and financial circumstances were favourable. In a State where forty-eight per cent of the population lived in rural areas, and for whom no secondary education was provided, a Labor government facing an election was looking for a way to arrest the drift of population to the cities, which was threatening the economic stability of the country areas. The

9. Ibid., p.129.
government took up Brooks' suggestion as a method of keeping the population in the rural areas and, utilizing the recently established Commonwealth Grants Commission, established the first of the area schools in the small towns of Hagley and Sheffield in 1936.

Although they were established primarily for political reasons, as was the case in Victoria, these schools found support from the start among the rural populace. They were established in the centres of prosperous districts where the boys did not have to be withdrawn from school at an early age to work on the family farm as unpaid labourers. The basis of agriculture in these districts was the small family farm, whose owners had a direct interest in the prosperity of the district and who supported an educational advance that was likely to bring about improvements for which they could directly benefit. Selth also points out that the children of the district were the sons of farm owners: there was no semi-nomadic labouring class which moved from district to district, creating a transient population in the schools so that the ideas and methods imparted were not directly applied. Instruction in the area school had a direct and immediate application in the work of the farm, and was thus more likely to win district support. The courses were practical and, in many cases, were directly related to the children's future occupations. Bessant has also commented that these schools were unique for the degree of local involvement in their organization and the freedom given to the teachers to develop their own courses of study.

It could be argued with some force that many of these conditions also applied to the Victorian schools and, although Selth does not

12. "The emergence of State secondary education...", loc.cit., p.140
say as much, the main reason for the Tasmanian schools' success was probably the fact that the agricultural course was the only one offered in them. This, combined with the reality of the more closely settled situation in Tasmania (thus requiring more scientific techniques), led to the schools' popularity. A board of enquiry, established by the Tasmanian Government in 1924, recognized the dangers of dual purpose schools, and commented that "there is very little prospect of agriculture being satisfactorily followed or of its being favourably regarded by either parents or pupils while it is merely a by-product of a school which has other aims to serve... Experience in other countries has shown that in order to make agricultural education effective, it must be given in schools organized for that special purpose".  

That the success of the area schools was unique, in both time and place, however, was proved by further experiments made by the Tasmanian Education Department. Believing that, "because the 'philosophy' of the area schools had been highly commended, other innovations should be based on a sound philosophy of education".  

the department responded to a rise in the school leaving age in 1936 by establishing 'modern' schools in urban areas, along the same lines as area schools, for the non-academic children who would be forced to stay on at school. As Selth comments, the significant difference between public acceptance of modern schools and of area schools was that the latter provided an education that was directly related to the vocational needs of the children and was not opposed by alternative courses of study in the same district. More often

15. Ibid., p.189.
than not, the modern schools were simply three-year extensions of primary schools, and they suffered from a lack of teachers, facilities and buildings, and they were therefore less attractive than neighbouring schools with better facilities and with courses leading to the more widely accepted School Board Fourth Year Certificate, which opened the door to more occupations. Consequently, the modern schools were failures.

The area schools of Tasmania have now almost disappeared, due to a combination of the effects of improved forms of communication (especially better transportation), greater industrialization, and city-trained teachers. All have influenced parents and children to seek a more general education which opens more doors. In Victoria, this situation existed before the agricultural high schools opened their doors; in the Solomons, it will probably occur in the future. Narrow specialization in secondary schools, it seems, is a second-best form of education.
APPENDIX 2.

VICTORIA'S POPULATION:

URBAN AND RURAL: MELBOURNE AND
REST OF STATE.

1906

1909

1919

URBAN.
RURAL.
MELBOURNE.
REST OF STATE.

SOURCE: VICTORIAN YEAR BOOK: 1906-7, 19
APPENDIX 3.

VICTORIA: PROPORTIONS OF THE WORKFORCE ENGAGED IN THE FIVE MAIN SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSIONAL</td>
<td>111,134</td>
<td>144,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
<td>222,658</td>
<td>288,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE</td>
<td>122,159</td>
<td>157,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECONDARY INDUSTRY</td>
<td>436,126</td>
<td>562,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY INDUSTRY</td>
<td>533,107</td>
<td>586,148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 4.

REGULATION XXVI. - AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

I. The Minister of Public Instruction may establish Continuation Schools, to be called Agricultural High Schools, under the following conditions:-

(a) At least one-half of the cost of the necessary buildings and equipment shall be contributed by local subscription.

(b) An area of ground of not less than 20 acres, situated in a position convenient to the High School, shall be provided, and vested in the Minister.

(c) At least 50 students paying prescribed fees shall be guaranteed before a proposal to establish a High School is entertained.

2. (a) Agricultural High Schools shall be under the control of the Minister, who will be assisted in the questions affecting course of study and general policy by a committee, consisting of the Minister of Agriculture, the Director of Education, and the Director of Agriculture.

(b) A local council, consisting of not less than five members, to be appointed by the Governor in Council, shall be established for each district High School. Their duties will be to exercise a general oversight in matters affecting their school, to expend the maintenance allowance allotted to each school, to exercise such supervision as the Minister may authorize over the farm operations, and to advise the Minister in all matters specially pertaining to the school.

3. The qualifications for enrolment of students shall be as follows:-

(a) Pupils must have obtained the Certificate of Merit, or
must have passed the primary or some higher examination of the
Melbourne University; or must have satisfied an inspector of schools
that they are qualified to profit by the course of study in such
school.

(b) They must furnish satisfactory evidence that they are of
good moral character, and of good general health.

(c) They must be at least fourteen years of age at the date of
enrolment.

4. The Minister may grant in each year scholarships entitling
holders thereof to free tuition for two or more years in any
approved courses of study prescribed in Agricultural High Schools.

5. The Council of any Agricultural High School may nominate for
free instruction in any prescribed courses of study in that school
students who possess the qualifications stated in section 3,
provided that the number of students so nominated shall not in any
year exceed 10 per cent. of the total number of students paying
full fees enrolled in that school.

6. The course of study shall include such subjects as may be
determined upon by the Minister, with the advice of the committee
named in section 2a.

7. At least one-third of the time devoted to instruction shall
be spent in the study (both practical and theoretical) of the
sciences bearing upon agriculture, and one-third of the time shall
be devoted to manual and practical work on the school farm or in the
school workshop.
8. During their course in an Agricultural High School, students will be required to attend lessons regularly and punctually in the subjects prescribed for their course, and may further be required to devote such time to practical outdoor work as the Principal may direct.

9. The fees to be paid by pupils shall be £8 8s. per annum, payable quarterly in advance.

10. No pupil shall be enrolled after the expiration of the first quarter unless with the special sanction of the Director of Education.

11. Any students may be excluded from attendance at the school on the ground of idleness or misconduct.

12. Holders of scholarships under Regulation XXI. 1(b) may be admitted as students at any Agricultural High School, and attendance at such school shall be held to comply with the conditions laid down in such Regulation for attendance at a Continuation School or Secondary School.

13. Candidates for admission to the teaching service of the Education Department may be admitted to an Agricultural High School under the conditions of Regulation X. for admission to a Continuation School, and all the provisions of such Regulation so far as they may be applicable shall be held to apply to Agricultural High Schools as regards such students.

APPENDIX 5.

AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL AT LIGHTENHOF (KREISLANDWIRTSCHULE)

Aims. -- Religious and moral education; a good general education; and scientific and practical courses enabling the scholars to become supervisors of small or great estates (or farms).

Course. -- Five years.


Admission. -- Pupils must be at least 10 years of age and not over 13 (though older pupils may be admitted). Certain certificates are necessary.

There may be an entrance examination corresponding to that of the fourth class. Pupils coming from High Schools are placed in the class corresponding with their abilities and knowledge.

Leaving Certificate. -- This is obtained by examination. It entitles exemption from one year's military service. It also, after at least one year's practical work on a large estate, gives entrance to the Royal Agricultural Academy and similar institutions (such as the great brewery at Weihenstephan).

Fees. -- Board, etc., equal to £20 per half-year, £2 10s. extra for minor expenses. Pupils must bring certain necessaries with them.

Tuition fees run from 50s. to 60s. Poor scholars can have all the fees remitted and all books lent them.

Source: F. Tate; Preliminary report of the director of education upon observations made during an official visit to Europe and America, Melbourne, 1908, p.103.
Subjects of Instruction

Agricultural Course:
Fee, £2/2/- per Quarter.

1. PRINCIPLES OF AGRICULTURE.
2. AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE (Plant knowledge, Animal knowledge, Climatology, Physics and Chemistry).
3. FARM PRACTICE.
4. GEOGRAPHY (Physical, Political and Commercial).
5. DRAWING (Model, Practical, Geometry, Sketching and Mechanical Drawing).
6. SLOYD & FARM HANDIWORK (The knowledge of tools and timbers, and construction of farm buildings).
7. ENGLISH.
8. MATHEMATICS (Arithmetic, Mensuration, Algebra, Geometry and Surveying).

A block of 20 acres of land close to the School has been secured for practice in farming. This will be in charge (under the advice of the Council of Management) of a competent Farm Manager.

Subjects of Instruction

Continuation Course:
Fee, £1/10/- per Quarter.

1. MATHEMATICS (Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry).
2. ENGLISH.
3. LATIN or FRENCH.
4. HISTORY (British).
5. GEOGRAPHY.
6. PHYSICS or CHEMISTRY (with laboratory work).
7. NATURE STUDY.
8. DRAWING.
9. SCHOOL METHOD.
10. SLOYD.
11. COOKERY.
12. PHYSICAL CULTURE.

The Continuation course fits students to become Teachers, and prepares them for the Junior and the Senior Public Examinations, qualifying for admission to the University.

Source: taken from a copy in the possession of Mr. J. MacMahon, State College of Victoria, Melbourne.
## Two Proposed Short Agricultural Courses 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course A (Warrnambool)</th>
<th>Course B (Ballarat)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manual Work</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical Agriculture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chemistry</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant Life</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animal Life</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soil, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Agriculture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, no.1914/4182, 30 January 1914.

## Dr. Thomas Cherry's Proposed Agricultural Course 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>14-16 years</th>
<th>16-18 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History and Civics</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Language</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography and Physiography</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principles of Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drawing</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manual Work</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 37 37

Source: P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, no.1914/15118, 19 October 1914.
APPENDIX 8.
AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS:
TOTAL ENROLMENTS 1907-1912.

SALE

WARRNAMBOOL

BALLARAT

SHEPPARTON

WANGARATTA

WARRAGUL

Enrolments 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Continuation Students</th>
<th>Agricultural Students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warrnambool</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leongatha</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansfield</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepparton</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warragul</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colac</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: P.R.O. (Vic.), Education Department files, Departmental Correspondence, High Schools Generally, nn., 13 March 1914.
WARRNAMBOOL AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS DOING EACH COURSE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuation</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>1908-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>Agricult.</td>
<td>1909-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>Agricult.</td>
<td>1910-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>Agric.</td>
<td>1911-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Education Department: Reports of the Minister of Public Instruction: Melbourne 1908-1912.
APPENDIX 10.

SALE AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL.

FIRST INTAKE 1907 - PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS FROM SALE TOWNSHIP.

FIRST INTAKE 1907 - PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS FROM OUTSIDE SALE WHOSE FATHERS WERE LISTED AS FARMERS OR GRAZIERS.

SOURCE: SALE AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL REGISTER 1907.
Appendix II.

Sale Agricultural High School
First Intake 1907 - Parents' Occupations.

Occupations: Breakdown of Categories Used Above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Skilled</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 farmers</td>
<td>schoolteacher</td>
<td>horse exporter</td>
<td>prison governor</td>
<td>gentleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 graziers</td>
<td>builder</td>
<td>2 tobacconists</td>
<td>2 bank managers</td>
<td>captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bootmaker</td>
<td>2 drapers</td>
<td>works overseer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 dentists</td>
<td>agent/store-keeper</td>
<td>police clerk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 tailors</td>
<td></td>
<td>clergyman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coachbuilder</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 contractors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>baker</td>
<td></td>
<td>housekeeper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>newspaper owner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>postmistress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>shire secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>boarding housekeeper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sale Agricultural High School Register 1907
### (a) Courses of Study in District High Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Common Courses</th>
<th>Industrial Courses</th>
<th>Secondary Courses</th>
<th>Agricultural Courses</th>
<th>Domestic Arts Courses</th>
<th>Uncommercial Courses</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrarat ...</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bairnsdale ...</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat ...</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baradine ...</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlemaine ...</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colac ...</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echuca ...</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geelong ...</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>Horsham ...</td>
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<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyabram ...</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leongatha ...</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Mansfield ...</td>
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<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryborough ...</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura ...</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.....</td>
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<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale ...</td>
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**Source:** P.P. (Vic.) 1914, Vol. 2, No. 1

(Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1913-14)

P. 35.

### (b) Courses of Study in District High Schools.

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<th>Industrial Course</th>
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*Not including 19 Manual Arts Students.*

**Source:** P.P. (Vic.) 1915, Vol. 2, No. 3

(Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1913-14)

P. 66.
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5. MANUSCRIPTS


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