

"Youth of today not inferior," says Etonbury headmaster

A LOCAL headmaster, Mr. R. N. Alexander, of Etonbury School, came to the defence of much-maligned youth during the school's annual speech day on Friday.

Admitting in his annual report that he was well into the third decade of his professional life, he said: "Experience tells me to utterly and completely refute the suggestion that youngsters of today are inferior in any sense to their predecessors. In many ways they are superior. They should be; they have greater opportunities."

He said that one heard and read a good deal about modern youth—much of which was true, much grossly exaggerated and much pure sensationalism.

"How difficult it is to determine the truth," he said, "There is without doubt restlessness, uncertainty, conflict and rebellion against the old and long-established ways of life; there is confusion and doubt; there seems to be less respect for property, both public and private."

The older generation, he went on, complained, accused and condemned, but it could be that there were faults there, too.

Mr. Alexander asked: "Do we take the easy path—that of criticism, that of alleging rather than proving that standards are falling, that of arguing from the particular to the general, apportioning blame, of setting a bad example, ignoring things that matter, of unknowingly worshipping false idols?"

Materialism

He also asked if people were all so caught up in the race for improved material conditions that the things of mind and spirit were neglected.

"As I see it one of the great needs of the age is a more serious acceptance of responsibility and legitimate authority, both individually and collectively," he declared.

If, he continued, members of the audience considered him a champion of youth they were right. If they thought he was satisfied they were wrong.

He was convinced that only through an education based on fundamental principles could man achieve his true destiny. "Methods, ways and means will change, but the principles will be the same, as will the basic needs of society," he added.

Earlier Mr. Alexander had reported that, from research he had made, the school had developed and widened its horizons in an amazing manner over the past 12 years—slowly and quietly, without some setbacks.

shortages the examination results bore testimony, certainly to good teaching and, in the main, to a good deal of earnest endeavour on the pupils' part, while it was also a story of progress and success in the non-classroom activities and sports.

However, it was sometimes difficult to fathom the wayward and mysterious workings of an adolescent's mind which was filled with hopes, dreams, passions and cravings, he stated.

Wrong priorities

It was impossible—and undesirable—to attempt to put an old head on young shoulders, but some young people (not many) seemed to establish a totally incorrect order of priorities.

"They fail to realize that it is impossible to make up for work left undone or badly done," Mr. Alexander said. "They refuse to believe that there must be a willingness to accept and act upon professional advice, an urge to indulge in real hard work, a necessity to properly apportion time, not to opt out when the going gets tough and things become irksome. First things must come first—otherwise accomplishment is far below potential capability."

The guest speaker, Dr. W. Bosley, principal of Mander College, Bedford, told the pupils and parents that there was no harm in awarding and winning prizes as long as competition was on a friendly basis and did not get out of control.

"However, it is important to realize that there are many more important things in life than merely passing examinations," he stated.

"It is important to work hard, whether we stand a chance of winning a prize or passing an examination or not. Most of our present economic troubles would be cured if this single fact were accepted nationally."

"It is also important to have consideration for other people—especially those who are what is now called 'under privileged.'"

Prizewinners

FORMS

- 1D—Valerie Elliott and John Grizinuskas.
- 1C—Joyce Brown and John Fitzpatrick.
- 1B—Molly Lucas and Paul Scott.
- 1A—Ruth Lockhart and Andrew Farrington.
- 2D—Denise Simpson and Andrew Willis.
- 2C—Susan Parcell and Giuseppe Nacci.
- 2B—Ellen C.