

TRAINING OF CADETS.

Citizens' Military Association Formed.

There was a good attendance at the Shire Hall on Tuesday evening, when a meeting was held for the purpose of forming a Citizens' Military Association in connection with the training of cadets. The chair was occupied by the shire president (Cr. J. B. King). It was explained that the area officer, Captain Miller, was unable to be present.

Lieut. Burrell said he had recently attended a school for officers at Ballarat, when the objects most essential in the training of cadets were emphasized. It was desired that every boy of 15 years should be physically fit, bright, smart, and a fair all round athlete; that he should recognise the value of discipline, as regards organisation and training; that he should have a fair knowledge of the rifle and be an accurate shot; and that the training should be in the direction of making the boys better citizens. Some years ago the Boys' Brigade in Warracknabeal was conducted on these lines, but training in that case was voluntary, whereas at the present time every boy was compelled to undergo training.

Unfortunately, there had not been the facilities for making the training of cadets in this centre as interesting or useful as it should be, and the purpose of forming the Citizens' Association was to overcome this drawback. Various ways had been suggested in which the citizens might cooperate to make the training of the boys more efficient. At Stawell on Wednesday next military sports were being held, under the auspices of the local association, when the whole of the boys of the 73rd Battalion would attend. About £20 or £40 had been provided for prizes. The Warracknabeal lads would take part in the competitions, and hoped to bring back some of the trophies. Recently a sports meeting was held at Horsham, when there was keen rivalry between the competitors. To enable the Warracknabeal boys to go to Stawell a lecture entertainment was being given on Monday evening, and it would be necessary for the citizens to guarantee the cost of a special train. Otherwise the boys would require to be absent for three days.

Mr. Wright Smith said he did not agree with the objects of this movement, though he was quite in sympathy with the cadet system. He recognised that a well trained boy was a valuable asset to the State, but he thought the citizens were being asked to take on a matter that belonged to the Defence Department. The scheme submitted was comprehensive, and would entail a lot of expense, the erection of drill halls, the providing of equipment, and appointment of instructors being suggested. The tone of the circular issued by the department did not please him. It was stated that the intention was to elim-

inate did not please him. It was stated that the intention was to eliminate the thought of the compulsory nature in the Defence Act. That seemed to be advocating the principle of voluntarism, which was the very thing which had placed the country into its present position. He thought that compulsion must be kept as a duty. Another objection was that the citizens should not be called upon to do these things when they had their State school to consider. Would anyone say that the system of training at the school was all that it should be? It was without a gymnasium, without a playground, without a tennis court. There was nothing for the development of the children. Yet they were asked to neglect these things, and to launch into another scheme. He did not think it was a fair thing. He thought that what was done by the citizens should be centred in the State school, and in that way they would turn out boys who would go into the cadet system well armed. For part of the year the school ground was under water. They were practically being asked to neglect the school at their doors, and to enter into heavy expense in another direction. He could not accept the scheme.

Lieut. Burrell said it was not intended to run in opposition to the school committee. The purpose of this association was to help the boys between the ages of 14 and 18, after they left school. Those were the most impressionable years, when it was desired to provide attractions which would prevent them running about the streets and getting into mischief. In other centres there were gymnasiums, and the boys gladly attended much more than the required number of times. In Warracknabeal, on the other hand, it was difficult to drag the boys to the compulsory parades specified for the year. The citizens would not be asked to build a drill hall. They were asked to supply equipment in the way of a gymnasium, so as to provide healthy amusement. A drill hall must be something more than an empty barn. If the boys were to be encouraged to attend, they aimed at developing a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Mr. Burkitt moved that a Citizens' Association be formed. He said he was in full sympathy with the aims of the movement. It was most important to take lads in hand at the ages specified. His view was that the aim was not to weaken the compulsory training clause, but to give greater interest and pleasure to the lads in the training they must undergo. If there was anything that would hold the lads it was a good gymnasium, with a competent instructor.

Mr. T. H. Mann seconded the motion. He remarked that for a period of two years he was in charge of the lads in Warracknabeal, and many a time he had felt really sorry for them. They had compulsory training, and nothing else. He did not think the object was to eliminate the compulsory part of the training, but to make it easier for the boys. When cadets had to put in long hours on parade

without any variation the training was not popular, but if games and exercises were provided for them to indulge in, the whole thing would be viewed from a different aspect. As far as compulsory military training in Australia was concerned, to his mind it was absolutely necessary, but they ought to make it as easy as possible.

Mr. J. B. Slason said it was a question of what was the duty of the citizen, and what was the duty of the department. If the right officers were provided, he believed the boys would enter into the training eagerly. Years ago there was no trouble in getting

men to the drill halls, where various attractions were provided. The trouble was to keep them away. Before going on with this movement the Government should be approached to ascertain whether it was proposed to have a drill hall erected in Warracknabeal.

Mr. Wright Smith said he was connected with the Boys' Brigade for eight years. They had a gymnasium, but when the cadet system came into force the brigade disappeared. His complaint was that the cadet system did not take the place of the Boys' Brigade. The department did not build a hall, and they did not provide a gymnasium. They provided nothing but monotonous drill. His contention was that they were not doing their duty to the boys through the State schools, which was the first essential in connection with the training system.

Mr. Long said the fact that the training at the State schools was incomplete would not justify them in overlooking the needs of the lads over 14 years. For that reason he would support the motion. If associations were formed throughout the Commonwealth on the lines proposed, they should go a long way in the direction of achieving the objects which Mr. Wright Smith had mentioned. If properly managed there would appear to be great possibilities for good in the formation of local committees to assist the training scheme.

The chairman said that it was well to have criticism of these matters. It was the duty of the citizens to do what they could for the boys, and the different associations would probably be of some benefit.

The motion was carried.

Officers were then appointed as follows:—President, Cr. J. B. King; vice-presidents, Messrs. T. H. Mann and J. G. Pitcher; secretary, Lieut. Burrell; executive committee, Dr. H. A. Connolly, Messrs. McDonald, Walls, Dare, Sleight, Burkitt and Dally, with the officers; treasurer, Mr. Corr; trustees, Messrs. R. Long and F. Johnston.

It was decided to guarantee the running of a special train to the Stawell sports on Wednesday next, so that the boys might get there and return in one day.