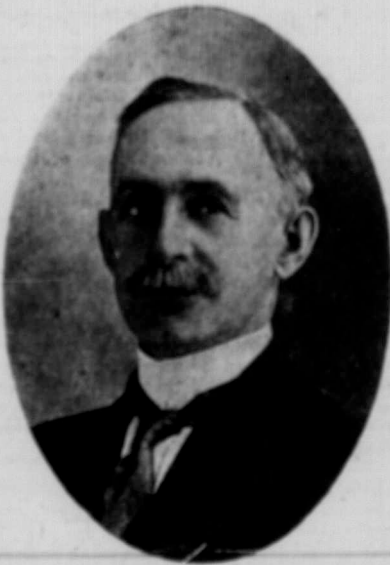


# Consolidated Schools in Manitoba

By M. HALL-JONES, Inspector of Schools

That Manitoba is paying annually a very large sum of money in taxes for the support of its rural schools, is a well known and generally acknowledged fact. That but very poor returns are being received by the tax payers for the amount of money spent is also a universally accepted fact. In connection with these two facts it is also well known that the conditions which tend to produce this unsatisfactory state of affairs educationally are largely beyond the control of the people as our educational system is at present constituted.

It is well known by those who have been in touch with rural education that Mani-



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toba is not alone as regards this unsatisfactory condition of educational affairs, for all the provinces of our Dominion and the various states of the Union to the south of us have the same complaint to make. The rural life problem in general in America and the educational side of it in particular is calling for radical remedial measures. Not only is the cry going up that the boys and girls, the men and the women are being educated off the farms, but even a more serious cry is being heard, that the boys and girls are not receiving an education of any kind in comparison to the large amount of money being spent on rural education. In the last and the present centuries wonderful advancement has been made in almost every activity of life, excepting that of rural school education. It has been almost at a standstill. The buildings are cheaply built, poorly heated, lighted and ventilated. The equipment is of the most meagre nature, if there be any at all, and the care and cleanliness of the building and premises are in a great majority of cases shocking in the extreme.

## Homesteaders' Handicaps

Owing to sparse settlement many of the districts are very large and consequently the pupils have in many cases far too great a distance to walk. Even were the roads always good and the weather not inclement, the distance is so great that girls and smaller children find it too great a strain physically to



The New Consolidated School at Roblin, Man.

attend school in good condition and frequently do not attend at all. This leads to small classes and irregularity, two conditions that work most seriously against the successful conduct of a school. Energy, life and spirit is lacking, and consequently the work drags along and pupils as well as teachers have but little incentive to do their best. Another great drawback to the success of the rural schools, which is partially brought about by good times, and the poor salaries paid in rural schools to male teachers or any teachers of experience, is that these

overcome many of the evils cited above. By consolidation of schools is merely meant the merging of two or more small, inefficient schools into one large one, large enough in numbers to produce energy and life in the school, and large enough geographically to provide funds for the carrying on of the work in a more thorough, up-to-date, scientific and successful manner. One very unfair condition existing at present in the rural school system is that while the children of one ratepayer may be living in proximity to the school, others may be miles away and have either



A van on the way to Gilbert Plains School, 8.45 a.m. The teacher is driving.

schools are largely in the hands of young and inexperienced girls, who naturally are not qualified to deal properly with and train the children attending. This is perhaps one of the most serious handicaps under which the rural schools labor. At the same time taking even young teachers for the schools, the supply is far less than the demand throughout the province, and it is found necessary in many cases to put the schools in charge of men and women without training or certificates.

The consolidation of rural schools will

to walk a long distance or provide conveyance at the parent's expense, while all ratepayers near or far pay the same tax rate. One strong feature of consolidation is that all pupils living over one mile from the school must be conveyed to and from the school each day at the expense of the district. This not only does away with this unfairness, but secures a larger and more regular attendance at school. While the average attendance at the ordinary rural schools runs from 30 to 55 per cent. of the enrolment, in the consolidated schools for the year 1911

it ran from 75 to 95 per cent., averaging over 75 per cent. in all the schools.

In the matter of the work done the consolidated school with its larger attendance gives the country child the advantage of a high school education at his own door, thus putting him on an equal footing with the city child. It has been found in this connection that in the consolidated schools of the province, of which there are now over 30, of those taking high school work over half of them are those who come from the country.

## Encourages the Pupils

A very bright feature of the consolidated schools is that the older pupils have been encouraged by larger classes and higher work to remain at school, and in many cases it has been noticed that older boys and girls who had left the



Facing the joys of a two-mile walk home from school

little old, one room country schools returned again when consolidation took place. Many of the small children now attend the whole year also as they are being comfortably conveyed over all kinds of roads in all kinds of weather to and from school. Over 40 vans for the conveyance of pupils were used in 1911, and during the whole of the year only 30 trips were missed, which goes to prove that the transportation plan is certainly a workable one in Manitoba. No reports have been heard of the children being cold in these vans, which are all covered and in some cases warmed by foot-warmers.

The scheme of consolidation is working towards a broader and less selfish spirit among the people, for the field of the consolidated school is larger, it interests a larger number of people and the children from a larger territory are thrown together. Thus the scheme tends towards a broad, national spirit and sectionalism and pettiness will disappear. With larger schools, larger territory, larger grounds and larger attendance, everything is done on a large scale.

## Cost About the Same

The cost in many cases is no more than at present, but in some cases it is slightly higher. However, the cost is certainly no greater for the value received. Efficiency is the test and in this our present rural schools come far short, while the consolidated school excels. It should be in education and the welfare of the people not "how cheap" but rather "how good."

## Originated in Massachusetts

The scheme of consolidation is not a new venture, neither does the Department

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These four School Buildings were discarded in favor of the handsome Consolidated School Building at Roblin, Manitoba