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THE NATURE STUDY COURSE FOR NEW BRUNSWICK SCHOOLS.

At several of the Teachers' Institutes this year, the Nature Study Course has been vigorously discussed, and in some cases, severely criticised. This discussion is a very good thing. It indicates a lively interest and freedom of thought, draws attention to weak points, and throws light upon difficulties. If such an important course of study could be introduced with no comment from those who are to teach it, the indication would be either

that free speech was not encouraged in our teachers, or that they cared little about what they are to teach and how it is to be taught.

Few, if any, teachers will deny that in an agricultural country nature study and agriculture should be taught. The question is whether the course as it stands is the best that can be devised.

The two adverse criticisms that we hear, from different sources, are that more work is laid down than can be accomplished in the given time, and that the course as a whole is not adapted to city schools.

In answer to questions asked at an Institute meeting in October the Director of Elementary Agricultural Education distinctly stated that it is not expected that the detailed course shall be carried out in full in every school, but that the course was made comprehensive so that all teachers might choose from it according to their environment and opportunity. He referred inquirers to the Introduction in the Nature Study pamphlet, presumably to the instruction, on page 8, that where more work is laid down than can be properly carried out, "subjects that are best adapted for study in the locality and that will therefore assist most in the education of the pupils, should be taken up."

Clear as this instruction is, it seems in some cases to have been overlooked or not fully understood. It might well be expanded and made more emphatic and detailed. Teachers of experience realize that in following any course of study they must depend upon their own judgment, but there are many inexperienced teachers who lack this confidence and need authoritative and explicit advice.

Destructive and unsympathetic criticisms leads to nothing. But the many teachers who, in different parts of the province, are carrying out the course with good results, should be able to make valuable constructive suggestions towards its next revision, whenever that may be. The Director has made it clear that such suggestions will be gladly considered.