

Minister of Education and Civics in Schools

In the February issue of this Journal appeared an editorial on "Civic Instruction in Schools," a copy of which was mailed to educational executives of each Province, together with a request for their opinion on this vital subject. In the March Journal some of the replies were given, and in this number appears others, all of which show that school authorities throughout the Dominion recognize the importance of teaching the children the civic life of the country, but what was surprising—agreeably surprising we might say—was that civics was a principal subject in most of the provinces. It is to be hoped that this teaching will bear fruit when the children come to the age of full citizenship. In the meantime, would it not be a good thing if these children would teach their fathers something of their responsibility as voters, for they, poor men, never had this opportunity, otherwise they would not be so remiss in their exercising the franchise, which is not only a privilege, but a responsibility as well.—Ed.

From the Minister of Education, Alberta.

The Editor,—

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your favor of February 23rd inviting my criticism of your editorial entitled "Civic Instruction in Schools," and beg to say that I am not in a position to speak for the other provinces of Canada, but I am quite certain that your comparison of the instruction given in American and Canadian schools respectively, from which you leave the impression that much more satisfactory instruction is given in American schools than in ours, is a very unfair comparison, in so far as Alberta is concerned. I am quite confident that we are giving as thorough instruction in civil government, which we describe on our programme of studies as "Civics," as in the most advanced state of the American union. To be sure we do not undertake to specialize our students in the public schools nor even in the high schools in the art of municipal government, but what we do undertake is to see that all students in so far as their capacity will permit are fully instructed in our system of government, municipal, provincial, federal and imperial. We have a text-book on the subject and are undertaking at the present time to have a new one prepared which we think will answer our purpose more satisfactorily.

I am sending you under separate cover a copy of our programme of studies from which you will see that Civics has an important place in the public school. We set an examination on this subject in the same way as we do in arithmetic. In the High School we teach constitutional history as well as Civics.

In order to be sure that all the teachers of the Province will be capable of teaching this subject properly, we see to it that all teachers who come to us from either the Old Country or the United States are given a special course in our Normal School and pass an examination upon Civics. Those who have been educated in Canada of course are familiar with our system.

Yours truly,

J. R. BOYLE,
Minister of Education, Alberta.

From the Superintendent of Education, Manitoba.

The Editor,—

I beg to acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of a copy of your February issue, and I note your request for an expression of opinion regarding the article upon "Civic Instruction in Schools."

As far as the Province of Manitoba is concerned, the members of the Advisory Board have long since recognized the value of such work.

Our programme of studies prescribes for the 5th Grade "The Idea of Government (Local)." For Grade VI. "The Idea of Government (Provincial)," and for Grade VII. "Government, Federal and Imperial." There is also prescribed for Grade VIII. a review of the work of the previous grades.

We have authorized, as a Teacher's Handbook in connection with this work, the Manitoba Edition of "Jenkin's Civics", Copp-Clark, Ltd, Toronto. I may say that this Handbook is used as a text in the first year of the High School, and that candidates for examination in all Courses are required to write upon the subject.

According to your contributor, "all that is required is adaptability on the part of the educational authorities in changing the syllabus to allow the introduction of one or two text books or even chapters on municipal government—the teacher will do the rest."

As far as Manitoba is concerned, these conditions have been compiled with for a number of years. I may say that the study of the subject has evoked considerable interest amongst teachers and pupils, and Mr. T. A. Hunt, K.C., City Solicitor of Winnipeg, has been good enough to give addresses upon the subject in various schools in Winnipeg, which have been thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils and favorably commented upon by the public in general.

I have the honor, etc.,

CHAS. K. NEWCOMBE,
Superintendent of Education for Manitoba.

From Headmaster of a Private School.

The Editor,—

Your article on Civics in the February number of the Municipal Journal occasioned me much pleasure. I have read with some interest the replies printed in the March issue.

The least any school should do for the boys (or the girls) who attend it, is to teach them their obligations to themselves and their duty to their country. The one is closely akin and merges into the other.

To do one's duty to one's country is surely impossible if one is ignorant of her history and her government. In a country, confessedly democratic where every man enjoys the franchise, what an enormous waste of power and abuse of privilege through ignorance and apathy of the proletariat. The cause of this apathy at the polls is traceable to the indifference manifested on this point in the child's education.

As it is a crime to send a boy into life ignorant of his powers for good or ill—unto himself and others—so is it a senseless waste to send out boys ignorant of their duties to the state and devoid of civic pride. The national loss is incalculable. As the higher the development of the individual the greater the national prowess—so the keener the civic conscience, the brighter the national ideal.

Mr. Editor, we should make Civics not a profession—but a passion. To know our powers would suggest the control of our functions. To meet the need—what can we do?

This we do at Berthier. First, last, and always, we remember that we are of Canada. We are preparing boys for Canadian life. We would give them Canadian ideals unhampered by the useless impedimenta of an effete society—but chastened by the serious knowledge of the power they must yield.

To this end we hold ever before their eyes the to-morrow, as the unfolding of to-day. To acquire knowledge useful and imperative for that to-morrow—we have what we call our "Civic Scrap-Book." Each boy may clip articles which impress him as being of interest and value to Canadian life. These after passing the school censorship, are pasted in the book. We believe that we shall all greatly profit from this gleanings.

Then there will be essays written on five subjects. For dictation, articles of civic interest will be read, and reading-subjects will be chosen irrespective of authorship or nationality. Of course, I need hardly point out that this is an advantage which the private school enjoys.

I agree with you, then, in the need you point out. Canadian children need civic knowledge. All their subjects really should be tinged with it. The method must vary according to circumstances. But as we value a precious jewel—let us develop intensely the civic conscience of our children.

I am, yours sincerely,

(Rev.) W. J. M. ANDREW.

The Grammar School,
Berthier-en-Haut.

GOOD ROADS.

The campaign for good roads being carried on throughout Canada is only part of the general awakening of the people to the causes which have led to the enormous increase in the prices of the necessities of life. That the transportation problem is all-important for the farmer-producer is without question. That he may at all seasons reach his markets at a minimum of time and expense is a necessary factor in the making of reasonable prices for his products. For the consumer, good roads have an advantage in the fact that by enabling the farmers to reach the markets in greater numbers, the supplies of produce will be keener. A further consequence of this larger attendance will be that more attention will be paid to the condition of the produce offered by those displaying it for sale.—Exchange.