

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Paper by Mr. Fred Magee, M.L.A., read at Maritime Teachers' Institute, Moncton, N.B., August, 1918.

"Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen:—I desire to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation for the invitation you have extended to me to address this Maritime gathering today. A convention of this sort must result in a better understanding of our needs, must widen our view point and encourage us to greater endeavour. During this period of National stress, when the energies of our people are devoted to the safeguarding of our democratic ideals and the privileges which we enjoy, when our young men are battling to retain the freedom of the British Constitution and battling, I am proud to say, successfully, it is difficult, indeed, to concentrate one's ideas on any subject of a local nature. Education, however, involves at all times, the highest interest of the people and offers the noblest theme for the citizen and statesman.

The education of the youth of the Maritime Provinces of those who are to follow us, of those who are to be the owners of the country, and the solace of our declining years, should and must command the earnest attention of all those blessed with a public spirit.

We are gathered here today to discuss various matters pertaining to the intensifying of our educational effort. We in a large measure represent the educational forces of the three provinces.

It is right then, that we should give thought and consideration to that education which is deemed the most beneficial to the development of industry and our national resources, and it is to discuss Vocational Education or that education which trains students in the arts and sciences underlying some trade or profession and fits them for profitable employment, that brings me here today. This class of education is new to N. B. and P. E. I. N. S., however, is grappling with the problem as are all the other Provinces of the Dominion. I take it that those of you here are familiar with the subject and realize its importance. Some of the countries of Europe have had Vocational Education for fifty years.

The U. S. in the twentieth century has come to the front as a country eagerly seeking such instruction and is spending millions of dollars annually to assist the various states in establishing vocational or industrial schools.

Our Federal Government, however, has not yet shown itself sufficiently interested, or cannot get itself sufficiently aroused, to give any assistance whatever to the Provinces. Appeal after appeal has been made to them by members of Parliament on the floors of the House but without avail. I hope to see this convention pass a resolution before adjournment, demanding that the Fed-

eral authorities come to the assistance of the Provinces in this regard. The people are pressing for such assistance. In fact, today as never before, men, with a realization of the need, are urging governments both great and small, to proceed with this absolutely essential form of instruction and the only acknowledged method of saving the human wastage that exists under the present systems in vogue, systems which have their usefulness but which neglect the essential requisite of **FITTING FOR LIFE**. Statistics of our public school systems show the futile attempt made. All our present day methods are still along cultural lines. What has this cultural dogma done for the masses which we as a democratic nation should first consider? Let us take the record from our own Province of N. B.

We expend in the vicinity of \$1,220,000 on our public school systems annually. We have approximately 73,000 students enrolled and only 3.2 per cent of our school population in High School with only 4 per cent. or one out of 250 in grade eleven. 16,000 pupils enter grade I, 1,103 enter the High Schools and only 343 graduate. Only 6.8 per cent. even in cities and towns reach High School, and less than 2 per cent. ever graduate. In the best of our schools the wastage in the grades is alarming after grade five. New Brunswick has 16,000 of secondary school age **NOT IN SCHOOL**. Is it not a fact that the great majority of our young people are destined to enter industry? No facilities are offered in New Brunswick as yet, by the towns or municipalities to prepare this great majority for profitable employment.

To become an efficient Province or an efficient Maritime Province we shall have to amalgamate the cultural and Vocational ideas of Education, and the state offer, free, to the youth of the country an opportunity to fit themselves for employment in our industries and in commerce which opportunity they do not at present enjoy. Full free instruction in agriculture, book-keeping and stenography, motor mechanics, forestry, woodworking, mining, domestic science, etc., as well as special instruction in the fisheries and in the industries of the country, should be added to our curriculum, and facilities provided in every city, town and municipality for acquiring such instruction, provided such city, town or municipality adopts and enforces compulsory attendance.

What opportunity does the present system give the poor man beyond instruction for his children in the three Rs? What opportunity is afforded you teachers for assisting 99½ per cent. of your pupils for their vocations in life? If a young man expresses a desire to enter a profession and shows ability, and his parents are in a position to assist financially, you are able under our present system to aid him somewhat and fit him for a collegiate career. If, however, the parents are poor and the young chap has no chance for a profession, but could