

# Good Roads In Their Relation to Consolidated Schools

Good Roads and Good Schools Should Be Considered An Investment, Not An Expense.—By Richard Lees, M.A.

THE relationship between good roads and good schools in rural districts is, and has always been, one of action and reaction. In the first place a community wide and progressive economy to realize the moral, social and intellectual importance of the best educational advantages, would not be very likely to overlook the benefits, both economic and social, to be derived from making the means of transportation and intercommunication as easy and pleasant as possible. In the second place, while the good road makes the school more easily accessible to all, it trains its patrons in those practical economies that lead them to see more clearly the importance of good roads.

These things, while true in their relation to the past, are becoming increasingly important in our day. We are at the threshold of a new era in the matter of rural school education. Rapid development along other lines is putting the rural school of the old type in the catalogue of things out of date. Decreasing population in all the agricultural districts is making it necessary for children to travel longer distances to school, if the schools are to have enough pupils to permit of efficient work. Changing conditions are demanding of the schools things that cannot be efficiently or economically provided in the one-roomed school with which we are familiar. As an illustration, it is almost universally conceded now that agriculture should be taught in all our rural schools. All the best and most progressive leaders in education are of opinion that manual training and domestic science should also be taught, if we are to improve or even maintain our status as an agricultural country.

## We Need Bigger Schools.

Feeble and spasmodic efforts are being made at doing the work in these subjects under our present system. That something is being accomplished no one doubts, but the conditions under which the work has to be undertaken constitute too great a handicap. Some of these conditions are the difficulty of securing competent teachers, and retaining their services when secured, the smallness of the schools making it difficult, if not impossible to carry on enterprises requiring the presence of a number of senior pupils, and the reluctance on the part of the people to make the necessary provision, especially in view of the fact that a change of teachers may at any time cause the whole outfit to be discarded. The only possible remedy for these things is in the combination of several small schools into one, in short, the introduction of what is known as the consolidated rural school. This plan insures a school district large enough and with resources adequate to provide the accommodation and equipment necessary for the efficient teaching of these subjects now recognized as so necessary. It brings together children of different grades in sufficient numbers to make possible the teaching of these subjects in a manner suited to the ages and attainments of the different grades. And it makes it possible to secure teachers properly trained and qualified to deal with these subjects, teachers whose special duty it is to do this work.

## Schools and Roads.

What has all this to do with good roads? Simply this. In the Province of Ontario less progress has been made in the consolidation of rural schools than in any other American community north of the Mexican border, and one of the arguments most frequently advanced by those who know that we cannot do what others have accomplished, is that transportation would be impossible with our roads. While not admitting that this is a valid argument, it cannot be denied that it would be in many places a very real difficulty. Wherever the consolidated school has taken root the problem of transportation has been found to be the most difficult of solution, and it is not necessary to point out that the difficulty is greatly intensified by bad roads. Probably one of the first things the consolidated school would do, if generally introduced, would be to bring home to us definitely the need for better roads and better methods of road construction. That has been the result in other places, and it has been found that the establishment of the new schools has been followed by a successful agitation for better roads.

To this there will doubtless be raised the ever present and

generally effective objection that it will cost money and there are many people who, while ready to spend money freely for their own comfort or enjoyment, look on the matter from an entirely different point of view when the expenditure has to do with something for the general advantage of the community. In all these matters, people, for the most part, fail to discriminate between spending and investing, then money is paid for the satisfaction of some passing need or desire it is spent. When paid for something that becomes a source of income or that can be again converted into money it is invested.

A farmer may expend a considerable sum, in providing a group of modern, well planned farm buildings, and find it a good investment, decreasing his tax, increasing production, and enhancing profits. Not only so, but he does it with the consciousness that, if at any time he wishes to realize on his property, it will bring in the market a price that should and might be in the matter of both schools and roads.

It has always been a well recognized fact that easy access to a good school adds greatly to the desirability, and hence to the value of farm property. Equally well recognized is the fact that free access to markets and sources of supplies are important factors in determining values. The interest generally taken in the location of a school house when a change of site becomes necessary, is evidence of the people who never displayed under ordinary conditions, will resist with all their power a proposal to move a school building even a few hundred yards from their homes. This feeling is indeed one of the most potent obstacles in the way of consolidating their schools. As a matter of fact, however, the present system some must, of necessity, be placed in more advantageous positions than others as regards school accommodation. Everyone can see a school at his door. There will be a much greater for every child at his own door. Similarly does the construction of good roads tend to equalize existing privileges in regard to markets.

In both cases the expenditure is in the nature of an investment, yielding a constant income in the way of increased facilities, greater comfort, and higher intellectual development, and at any time over, that is, in cash again. This presupposes, however, that the expenditure is wisely and judiciously made. Much of the money now spent is wasted, in the case of the schools, this is owing to the lack of comfortable and adequate accommodation, the em-

The Consolidated School at Kingston, N.B.  
This school is one of the chain of Consolidated Schools established by the late Sir Wm. Macdonald, it has now been taken over by the ratepayers and has given such good satisfaction that a number of others have been established in the province.

ployment of cheap, untrained, and inefficient teachers, and the smallness of the schools increasing greatly the number of teachers necessary. In the other case, one who spends a considerable portion of his time on the roads cannot fail to be convinced that a very large proportion of the money and energy spent on them is wasted. This is owing chiefly to careless, imperfect and incomplete construction and to the entire lack of attention after construction.

## A Community Centre.

There is another phase of this question that is worthy of at least a passing note. Wherever the consolidated school has become established it has quickly developed into a community centre. The school is in most cases the only building which is the property of the community as a whole. Unlike the small cross-roads school, it is provided with the appliances that make possible the holding of public meetings in comfort. Hence it naturally becomes the centre about which all the social activities of the community gather. Its value in this respect is proportional to its ease of accessibility, and that again is dependent on the character of the roads. The disposition to attend an evening meeting at a distance of five or six miles is largely influenced by the degree of comfort or discomfort with which the journey can be made, perhaps quite as much as by a consideration of the pleasure or benefit to be derived from the meeting itself.

In conclusion, it will appear, as was pointed out at the beginning, that the good school and the good road movement are closely related to each other. The school is not possible without roads. The better the roads, the easier the establishment and maintenance of the school. On the other hand, the school has an influence both direct and indirect on the promotion of road improvement. And last, both are movements that find their highest development in communities that are progressive and enterprising, and in consequence will do so.

Sugar maple trees are a specially valuable asset to a farm this year. Regular commercial sugar is scarce and high.

There is money in maple sap, and beyond the work, it is practically all profit. You don't have to plow, or harrow, or fertilize the ground for the maple harvest. You don't have to do any spring seeding, and you don't have to wait patiently from spring to fall. The maple season comes at a time when other farm work is slack. The trees require no spraying, pruning, fertilizing or watering. They stand, as a rule, on unutilized or rocky land. The maple tree was a Godsend to Canada in the pioneer days. It is no less so now in the war scarcity of sugar. The time during which this crop may be harvested is limited. Prospects point to good prices for maple products this year. Every evaporator should therefore be worked to capacity while the run lasts.



A Clay Road that is Kept Good by Dragging.

Good roads depend not so much on the material of their construction as upon good drainage and careful maintenance. Note that on this clay road in Essex County the crown being somewhat excessive, the surface was dragged from the centre outward.