

Agricultural Education Rural Schools Problem

Addresses Delivered by Chairman Dickson of Agriculture Committee of Legislature, Chief Superintendent of Education Carter and Others Last Evening--Suggested That Old Government House Grounds be Used for Agricultural Work of Normal School--Sussex Consolidated School Wants Demonstration Farm

A public meeting of the committee on agriculture was held in the Legislative Assembly chamber on Monday evening. Mr. W. B. Dickson of Albert was in the chair and the subject of agricultural education in the rural schools was discussed at considerable length.

Chairman Dickson.

Mr. Dickson upon taking the chair said that in the brief address he made in the House last session, on the Budget debate, he urged upon all young men who proposed to follow farming to take a course, either short or full course, at one of the agricultural colleges. The knowledge and experience gained there could be put into practice when they returned to their farms and the result could not be otherwise than for their own good. He was convinced that this question was one of the most important topics that could engage the attention of this House and of the people of the province. He was pleased to note that he was not alone in this conviction, but that thoughtful men were coming to a more earnest realization of the importance of scientific training and exact knowledge for the young man who wished to be a successful farmer. The Premier of this province said in his address at the opening of the Maritime Winter Fair at Amherst in December last—

"We are beginning to realize more and more, we are beginning to see more clearly, that if progress is to be made along agricultural lines, scientific methods will have to be employed. The old idea that farming was something any man could engage in, that a man did not require to be educated or have any scientific knowledge, is passing fast away, and everywhere it is realized that farming is one of the most scientific callings in the world; and that the man to succeed as a farmer must have a technical education along the line in which he is engaged just as complete as the man in any other pursuit."

The Hon. A. K. McLean, Attorney General of Nova Scotia, who represented his government at that fair opening, said that he should have the opportunity of a training and we can never hope to have agriculture take a high place in this country unless technical training is provided. Farming is just as much a business as manufacturing. Other thoughtful men in various parts of these Maritime Provinces were giving much attention and serious thought to securing a thoughtful training and technical education for the young man who would till the soil and but little less important for the young woman who would be their life companions, and direct the domestic economy of the farms. To be industrious is a very important thing in any vocation in life, and no farmer can hope to succeed unless he has the quality of industry, but to be able to direct one's energies properly is equally important.

Conditions Are Improving.

Perhaps it is not too much to say that the minds of the people of the Maritime Provinces were as well trained and as well stored with general knowledge as in any part of America, but he believed in common with many others who have given this matter thought, that we were applying our scientific knowledge to other branches than agriculture. We have been educating our young people away from the farms and making of them lawyers, bankers, doctors, merchants and managers of industrial concerns. Now, we should give more earnest attention to educating our young men and young women back to the soil. He was pleased to note by the report of the Commissioner of Agriculture that a greater number of young men from New Brunswick attended the agricultural schools at Truro or Guelph last year than in any previous year, the record being 41 in 1910 and 31 in 1909, 25 in 1908, and only 12 in 1906. The Agricultural College at Truro was started by the Nova Scotia Government only four

years ago, there being 60 students the first year. Last year 350 attended, these provinces? There ought to be fifty among all the young men of these provinces? There ought to be every winter three thousand young men in the Maritime Provinces who were willing to give some of their time to study and preparation for their life calling as the nation's producers. In his splendid address before this House a few days ago, the Hon. Provincial Secretary touched upon the practical side of this question when he said that the scientific hand now under cultivation would increase their productivity at least 25 per cent. That means that if our farmers had technical training for their profession and applied scientific knowledge to their life work they could, without any greater effort produce one-quarter more from the same areas as now tilled; and indeed scientific training would enable the farmer to take life much easier than he now does, and give him a far greater reward for his labors.

Principal Bridges of the Normal School.

Dr. Bridges, Principal of the Normal School, being called upon, said that the subject of keeping the young teachers who every year pass through the Normal School of the Province, was a very vital one. Instead of keeping them at home, the way was being made easier each year for them to go West. He thought the school libraries should contain a greater number of books upon the subject of agriculture.

Sussex After Demonstration Farm.

Mr. W. B. Jonah, of Sussex, said that his mission to Fredericton was to confer with the Hon. Superintendent of Education along the very lines discussed at the meeting. In connection with the school at Sussex, in addition to school gardens, the manual training and domestic science departments, they wished to have a demonstration farm. It was proposed to set aside about five acres of land, which the school would take and equip as a model farm, and they thought the Department of Agriculture or the Board of Education should provide the instructor. He believed they could get the young people interested in farm life at such a demonstration farm, and not only would they permanently remain on the farm, but they would also interest their parents and neighbors.

The Other Speakers.

Mr. LaBille, M. P. P., expressed regret that so many young men were leaving the province. He was deeply interested in the subject of agriculture, and some of his happiest years of life were spent as head of the Agricultural Department.

Mr. Woods, M. P. P., thought that some of the classical subjects might be dropped from the common school course and the subjects of practical agriculture and domestic science taken up one day each week.

Mr. Kidner, director of Manual Training, said that agricultural education and household science go hand in hand in the schools, and explained the Kansas scheme, which was an enlargement of the same.

Dr. D. W. Hamilton, of the Normal School staff, thought of the Consolidated Schools in the province were turning the attention of students more towards the Normal School and College than to the farm. There were great difficulties in teaching agriculture at the Normal School as at present equipped, and he suggested that the old Government House property in Fredericton might be used for such a school garden and agricultural educational work. He thought nature studies might be more emphasized in the country schools, and he thought that it would be a good thing if all school inspectors were given an opportunity to take a short course at an agricultural school.

Chief Superintendent Carter said that plans were maturing for enlargement of the Normal School, and he hoped that it would be possible to have there in winter short courses in agriculture, dairying, etc. He expressed much interest in the proposal made by Mr. Jonah, which was in line with a recommendation made in his annual report.

Mr. Turney, Provincial Horticulturist, spoke of the excellent practical work done by the representatives of the Department of Agriculture in each county in Ontario, to show the increased value of crops resulting from the teaching and supervision.

Chairman Dickson expressed his pleasure at the splendid addresses and at the success of the meeting. He felt that the result could not be otherwise than beneficial.

The meeting then adjourned.

that a text book might be introduced that would embrace both Chemistry and Physics.

Farms at Consolidated Schools.

Considering what it was possible to do to assist agricultural education, he thought there should be a good farm in connection with every consolidated school, conducted along commercial lines and self-sustaining. Pupils should have opportunity to work on such farms and be paid for their labor. Every three or four years the farm should be moved to a new locality, thus educating not only the pupils but also an object lesson for all young people. The province could not over-emphasize the importance of sending specially trained lecturers and instructors among the farmers.

Two very serious obstacles against the success of school gardens was that during two months of the summer season the teachers and scholars were away and that there were also a very large proportion of female teachers who were but little interested in agriculture. There were too few teachers anyway and some must be devised to keep the young men and young women who were trained at our Normal School and University in our province for at least three or four years' service. The province had a right to expect that the Superintendent did not claim that an agricultural education could be imparted in the common school. The most that could be expected, was to give the boys and girls an inclination toward the farm. The farmer's day was counting and if the Board of Education could do anything in a public school that would make the farm life more attractive, they would be glad to do it.

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