

The Farmer's Advocate

AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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Public Sentiment Would Help the Dairy Industry.

Quite frequently little incidents occur, having a direct bearing upon the trade in dairy products, which point to the fact that Ontario dairymen should give the enterprise in this Province some very serious and broad-minded consideration. Occasionally the Dairy Standards Act, recently placed on the Statute Books, caused mild, little ripples to rise on the now quiet waters of the dairy industry, but when the war is over and the unusual demand ceases, coincidently with a period of reconstruction, the character of which no one can foretell exactly, it may require more drastic legislation to soothe the troubled waters upon which Ontario makers and dairymen generally may find themselves at sea. The situation is briefly thus: instructors, inspectors and all men interested in the trade acknowledged the superiority of Quebec butter and that produced in the Western Provinces. However, the industry in Ontario was well established along certain lines; the home market was good and only through a campaign of education and instruction, extending over a period of years, did the authorities hope to alter things for the better. Nevertheless, prices were moderate and heed was being given to the advice intended to eventually bear good fruit. Suddenly the scene was changed. Europe sprang to arms, farm produce increased in value, and milk products of the staple nature soared to exceptional heights. During the more prosperous days the plea for better quality did not meet with such response, which was not unexpected, and now it is felt that only a sharp decline in prices will cause the dairymen and makers to recognize the importance of reorganizing their business along more modern lines. The signing of peace terms will undoubtedly mark the end of such values for cheese and butter as we have been receiving, and after this Ontario, Quebec and the Prairie Provinces will compete in a somewhat restricted market on a straight quality basis. That is the time and those are the conditions we should be prepared to meet.

The creamery butter exhibit at the Canadian National Exhibition was significant in this regard. A search for Ontario prize winners in the list of awards

will reveal to all how more up-to-date methods in other provinces have been responsible for a superior product. In Quebec a large portion of the milk to be made into butter is separated at the creameries, which gives the maker more control of the factories which influence the quality. Furthermore the entries which are sent west for exhibition come from a district which is thoroughly organized and any sample not up to the standard for quality is turned back. The law would probably not forbid any exhibitor making an entry, but public sentiment in the Province of Quebec would, if his product would do otherwise than bring credit and honor to the home industry. They have started right in the Western Provinces where old-time methods were never practiced. It is, consequently, an easy matter for them to go on and improve all the time. If we could exchange our customs, traditions and ideas for strictly up-to-date methods, and a strong public sentiment in favor of quality, this banner live-stock Province of the Dominion would be able to place a product, qualified to meet any competition, on the market. There is too much local feeling, too much fear of losing patrons, too little regard for the future, and altogether too much lack of public sentiment on the part of makers and milk producers throughout the Province of Ontario. Let us get together on this matter, take some pride in the output of our farms and our herds and make our dairy products as good, or better, than any placed before the public.

The Cost of Consolidated Schools.

The advantages of uniting school districts to form a consolidated school are numerous and weighty. But though the expense of running the single school would undoubtedly be less than the expense of continuing the three or four small schools which would be abandoned, yet the cost of transporting the pupils at public expense is fairly high and usually results in increasing the total cost. Undoubtedly the cost is usually greater though some advocates of the system dislike to admit this. Consolidation does cost more in the aggregate, but surely it ought to cost more for it provides a better school system and a more efficient education.

Farmers are very cautious and canny where money is concerned and the persistent and most general objection to consolidation is usually on this account. But let us see the experience of those who have tried it and draw our own conclusions from their experience.

Aggregate Cost.

Two small schools at Bridgen and McKinley, Manitoba, were merged into one consolidated school called Bridgenley in 1909. The average enrolment at Bridgen was 26 for the five years previously and the average attendance was only 10, that is to say, only 38% of the pupils attended as a rule. The statistics for McKinley were: enrolment 18, and average attendance 9, or only 50% attended usually.

This is surely a bad record for the old system. Under the new consolidated system the average attendance rose to 67% and for those who were conveyed the average attendance was 75%. And yet this is not a record for Manitoba as the average attendance of some schools for conveyed pupils was as high in some cases as 80%, 85% (in two schools), 90% at Melita, and 94% at Tenlow, where no fewer than 35 pupils were conveyed daily; thus every one of these 35 children had almost perfect attendance.

The statistics for 1908-09 showed the value of transportation, for in the McKinley district where pupils were conveyed, the average attendance was 95% of the enrolment, while in Bridgen, where pupils had to walk, the average was only 45%. Where conveyance was to be had the attendance was more than twice as good, and the children had comfort both going and coming.

The cost per pupil some years before consolidation was as high as \$75; since consolidation the cost is little more than half that sum. The tax rate before consolidation was 8½ mills, and since consolidation only 11 mills, a very slight increase in the district which contains 24 sections and hardly feels the difference, which is more than compensated for by the superior advantages. Yet this school is only a partial consolidation, condensing two schools into one. Two vans, costing \$100 and \$120, ran on routes of four miles each, and were not heated in winter.

Isabella Consolidated School.

Another successful consolidated school exists at Isabella, Manitoba, into which the districts of Isabella, Shamrock and Rothesay were merged in 1912 without a single adverse vote. An extension to the old Isabella school was made, resulting in two good rooms properly heated, and a school site of four acres. Since consolidation the school has more than doubled its enrolment, some pupils who did not attend on an average one month in six have not lost a day since transportation was furnished by the Board. The school now teaches beyond Grade VIII and enough pupils attend these higher classes, who, if their parents had to pay for them outside, would cost \$2,500 for board and tuition. Two vans (costing \$195 and \$33 extra for sleighs) travel between 10 and 11 miles for the round trips, taking 13 and 14 pupils respectively. The greatest

distance any child travels is about six miles. The yearly cost of operating the vans is \$500 and \$525. The cost of building the addition, including cloakroom, coalroom, teacher's room, manual training room, reflooring and painting the old building and refitting it with new individual desks and heaters, came to \$2,200.

The important point is that in the old Isabella district the school tax was between \$10 and \$11 per quarter section, and in the consolidation district the tax is only between \$12 and \$13.

Surely in this case the increase is infinitesimal but consider also the enrolment which has more than doubled, the attendance which is now 80% instead of 53% and 70% in two of the old districts, the better accommodation, the comfort of going to school and the opportunity of taking higher grades of work under two teachers, with more individual attention. No wonder the parents declare they would refuse to go back to the old conditions and would just as soon go back to the sickle, the dog-team, and the Red River cart.

Starbuck Consolidated Schools.

This is a typical example of a different kind of school where the total attendance is 117 and of these 59 are conveyed daily in vans. It comprises the merged districts of Kinlough, Holyrood and Starbuck, where the average attendance before consolidation was only 46%, 54%, and 48% respectively. In other words, only half the pupils were in the habit of being present. This is a village consolidation consisting of 59½ sections of land and the village of Starbuck, and has a total valuation of \$165,300. Previous to consolidation the average school tax was 15 1/10 mills on the dollar or \$9.75 per quarter section. For three years after consolidation the tax was 22 mills on the dollar or \$13.90 per quarter section, or an increase of \$4.15 over the average of the three districts. Two vans cost \$2.90 a day each and the third costs \$3.65, but in the latter case the driver is obliged to run a second van when necessary without further pay. These vans never miss a trip.

What do the sections get for this increase of taxes? They have a school site of 10 acres costing \$1,000, a white brick school on a stone foundation, with four large classrooms and a cloakroom for each, a laboratory for physics and chemistry, an apparatus room, and a library, a basement with two playrooms, excellent heating arrangements, good water supply, and sanitary offices such as exist in a city school. The staff consists of a male principal and two female assistants, who teach all grades of the elementary school and those leading to second and third class teachers' certificates. This last feature is an excellent one as the country children will be enabled to qualify themselves for the teaching profession at home, without boarding away from home during a high school course.

Are all these advantages worth an extra tax of \$4.15 per quarter section? Would the farmers of the eastern provinces be willing to pay this small amount for these extra advantages? We leave it to our readers.

Roblin Consolidated School.

This is probably the largest rural consolidation in any Canadian province as it combines no fewer than six rural school districts, and comprises 94 sections of land and the village of Roblin. In 1912 seven vans conveyed 100 children daily, the routes varying from 8 to 9 miles at a cost of \$3 to \$4 a day per van, the average being \$3.30. Only one trip was missed that year on account of the driver's sickness. Four teachers (two men and two women) are the staff, but more will be needed. These teachers prefer the new systems as they have more company and better boarding facilities. Here is the solution of the difficulty of retaining teachers in rural districts.

The financial aspect is best left in the secretary's own words in his report on 1912.

"Regarding financial matters which are important, but not the most important, the Provincial Government gave a grant of \$500 for starting a consolidated school, a grant of \$200 for raising the school to intermediate standing, and still pays the annual grant of \$130 for each of the schools consolidated, in our case, six times \$130 or \$780 in all. The municipality pays the usual grant of \$240 for each of the schools consolidated, in our case six times \$240 or \$1,440 in all. In addition, we receive from the Provincial Government a quarter of the van bill, in our case \$1,100. In future the Government will pay one half of the van bill. The balance was made up by a school tax of \$12 on a quarter section or 15 mills on the dollar. This was sufficient to pay all expenses for 1912. The taxes were less than in some rural districts where only three or four children attend. We made no attempt to save money, but got everything that was necessary, our motto being 'A GOOD SCHOOL FIRST.' The residents would not return to the old method if it cost twice as much."

Here lies the secret. Local pride and effort, backed up by satisfactory government assistance. These consolidated schools get the sum of several grants formerly paid to the separate districts. This is the same as before. The initial grant of \$500 is only paid once. The only additional grant is the government's offer to pay half of the cost of transportation and \$20 a month for each teacher employed, and \$20 also in respect to every teacher formerly employed, but now unnecessary. These grants of course are considerable, but in view of the higher salaries prevailing in the West, are not excessive. The Department of Education in Manitoba has succeeded in giving such grants that the extra local cost is not burdensome to rural tax payers.