

FARM AND DAIRY & RURAL HOME



We Welcome Practical Progress

The Recognized Element of Dairying in Canada

Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land.—Lord Chatham

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What Consolidation is Doing for Rural Schools

SOME philosophers of a former time is said to have taken the amount of soap consumed by a community as the best measure of its civilization. A British Chancellor of the Exchequer at a later time claimed that the quantity of sulphuric acid manufactured in Britain might be taken as a measure of the civilization of the nation, asserting that this substance played so important a part in manufactures generally that it might well rank as a standard. Recently the New York Outlook has set up a new standard, saying of a backward county in one of the states that it had only one consolidated school. What would become of our Ontario civilization if measured by this standard?

What is now generally known as the consolidated rural school is a purely American product. In the densely populated areas of Britain and the European continent the conditions that make it necessary or even desirable are wanting. On this continent, however, conditions are entirely different. The country school is often isolated, poorly attended and without social or even educational influence or prestige.

The little one-roomed school with one teacher served its day and generation well. It belongs to the past rather than to the present, and it should not now be permitted to stand as an obstacle in the path of progress. Could we have in our rural communities the school of half a century ago with its 40 or 50 pupils, many of them, especially in the winter months, between 15 and 20 years of age, with a strong man in charge, it might be different. That has gone, however, never to return. How completely gone will be seen when it is stated that there are now about 5,000 rural schools in Ontario with a total enrolment that averages about 40 for each and an average attendance of slightly over half that or about 22. Deduct from this some 400 schools, which owing to their location in country villages have a larger attendance with two or three teachers, and the figures for the purely rural schools will be considerably lowered.

It was a consideration of conditions such as these that led Superintendent Eaton of Concord,

Outline of the Plan. Its Wonderful Growth. Advantages Outlined and Objections Considered. Fourth and Concluding Article of the Series

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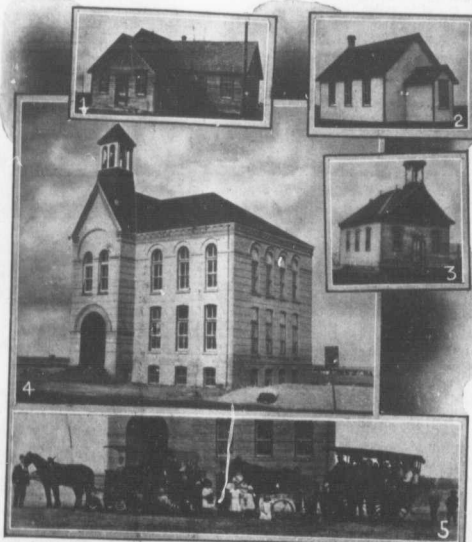
Mass., some 40 years ago, to conceive the idea of combining into one, groups of the small country schools of his district. The movement was for 36 years in the embryo stage, obscure, out of sight and unheard of. Then it began to show signs of life and about the beginning of the present century those who were keeping up with educational progress began to hear of it. Since that time the rapidity of growth has been amazing, till at present it has taken root in some 32

states of the union and over 15,000 schools have been consolidated. They are in all parts of the country and seem to thrive equally well in the bleak, rugged hills of Maine and Vermont, the breezy stretches of North Dakota, or the balmy glades of Florida.

In Canada we seem to be slower to recognize a good thing or else more joined to the idols we have been accustomed to bow to, for the movement is just getting started here. Ontario has done practically nothing. That may be owing to the unfortunate selection made for the location of Sir William MacDonald's experimental school, or it may not. Some progress has been made in New Brunswick, where seven schools are in operation. Manitoba, however, takes the lead. There the movement took definite shape in 1906. At the end of 1912 there were 37 consolidated schools, and in November last year, 55.

MEANING OF CONSOLIDATION

As the terms implies consolidation is the joining together of several small rural schools to form one larger school. In some places the township is made the unit of consolidation, but experience has shown that this is frequently unwise. Groups can be made to work more economically and efficiently in many cases by disregarding township lines or even county lines. When the group is formed, a building large enough to accommodate all the children of the combined schools is erected in the most accessible place. It is thoroughly equipped with all the appliances of a modern school, for one of the purposes of the movement is to give the children of the farmer all the advantages town children have, which cannot be done in the little one-roomed school. A "school yard" of from six to ten acres is generally provided, which gives ample scope for games of all kinds and leaves plenty of room for gardens, experimental plots and ornamental planting. To this school the children are brought in vans, which in the most successful schools are provided by and remain the property of the school. For these vans competent and responsible drivers are employed and the children go to



Is the Change Here Illustrated a Good One for the Country Child?

The farmers' children around Snowflake, Man., used to get their education in the unattractive, under-equipped and poorly manned schools, 1, 2 and 3 of the illustration. They now attend the splendidly equipped Consolidated School, No. 4, where they receive the instruction from the best teachers and where the equipment is right up-to-date. Instead of walking long distances to school as they used to do, the children travel in the comfortable covered vans seen in No. 5. Would such consolidation be a good thing for Ontario country children? Mr. Lees gives his side of this question in the article adjoining.—Ours courtesy Manitoba Dept. of Education.