

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY
THE WILLIAM WELD COMPANY (LIMITED).

JOHN WELD, MANAGER.

AGENTS FOR THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME JOURNAL,
WINNIPEG, MAN.

LONDON (ENGLAND) OFFICE:

W. W. CHAPMAN, Agent, Mowbray House, Norfolk Street,
London, W. C., England.

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CONTINUATION CLASSES AND RURAL SCHOOLS.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

The new regulations for the reorganization of Continuation Classes throughout the rural schools are out. Before reviewing them, I desire to say that it is much too late in the year to publish them. They should have been in the hands of the public at the close of the June term, and not "rushed out by express" at this late hour. School boards must be much inconvenienced by the carelessness and sheer tardiness of the Education Department. And then, no good reason can be given for the delay. It is simply the fault of the Department. You cannot get anything out of the Education Department in anything like a business-like manner. It is delay! delay! and "rush" announcements at the 12th hour. The public was promised a live administration of the Department under the new regime, but, in the administration of official work, it is not any improvement on the old. Now, why in the name of reason, cannot official reports be got out within two or three weeks of the time they are received? We want them while they are fresh and timely, rather than, (as usual), six or twelve months too late, for it destroys all thoughtful and practical interest in reports, and no person will read them when they are months too late.

As to whose fault it is for delay, I believe it is the fault of the system. The old routine way still lingers. The clerks make their own rules. They will prepare to have the reports printed to-morrow—not to-day. The Minister and the Superintendent have no knowledge of the delay and of the injury it is to the Department, and to education, too. Can not Dr. Pyne and Dr. Seath look into this matter at once, and give us reports in decent time? I ask them to do so in the public interest.

Again, I beg to say here that it is the duty of the Hon. Dr. Pyne to properly man the Department. There is no doubt that the Superintendent of Education has far too much work to do, and should have an assistant to help him, by relieving

him of some of his duties. Again, when his position was created, there was and is no staff other than the old and perhaps overworked staff of the Department. The Superintendent has a terrible responsibility, and he should be relieved of work and detail. It is the duty of Dr. Pyne to give Dr. Seath a staff to do his work, and to enable him to revise and supervise the work of his Department. As to the money to pay a staff, it is a mere trifle out of the great revenues at the Minister's disposal. It should be remembered that there are two and one-quarter millions of people in this Province, and there is an enormous amount of work in administration. It must be done. And no man can do it alone.

And now as to Inspector Cowley's report. I venture to say, although I do not know, that it was ready and in the hands of the Department in good time. He is always prompt and modern in his methods, and he never lags.

This official document is authoritative, and places the Continuation Classes on a modern basis, in harmony with our school system. Hitherto these classes were viewed by many as a fifth wheel to a coach. They are now, through the Inspector's work, made an integral, and, I believe, a permanent part of the Ontario School System. This is a great step in advance. The rural classes know now that these schools have come to stay, and the reason for this is that their success has justified their institution and recent improvement. Indeed, I know of nothing else in our school system that so well indicates the modern character of our system, and shows a desire to feel out after and to supply the unorganized yet felt needs of our rural classes than these schools. They provide a higher education for the boy and the girl while under the father's roof, and this is good for the boy and girl, and equally good for the father and mother, too.

By these regulations, I observe there are to be three grades of schools, called A, B and C, or 3-teacher, 2-teacher and 1-teacher schools, adapted to the ability and needs of the localities. The higher grade is indeed a good and cheap High School, and it is at the people's doors, in the midst of rural surroundings. I need not point out the immense advantage this is in every way it is looked at. It must appeal to local pride. I would have thought that two grades would have done, but perhaps in poor localities the conditions would be too exacting. Every citizen should get at least a fair chance to educate his children, and the State must bring the school to the people. These are indisputable premises to be worked out.

The qualifications that Inspector Cowley demands for teachers are high, and I doubt if this Province can supply the grade of teacher that they call for. In the highest grade of Continuation School the principal is required to have the same qualifications as the principal of a High School. This seems to me a high standard, but then, it is to the rural classes a guarantee that they are getting the best; indeed, as good as the secondary schools. Therefore, it justifies the Trustee Boards in making a supreme effort to equip a Grade A school. The adjustment of the Government grant is such that school boards are encouraged to do well. What could be more common-sense than this? It is very judicious. The grant is also wisely distributed over equipment—library, scientific apparatus, maps, etc., and then, again, it bears favorably on the qualifications of the staff. The whole scheme is one that must induce our people to excel. And is it not time that our rural classes get some consideration from the Department? The largely-increased Government grant is most commendable, and it is the best proof one needs—if any is needed—to show that Inspector Cowley has, by his earnestness and zeal, been able to convince the Minister and Legislature that these are among the most vital schools in the Province. They touch the great mass of rural people at a point where the potential results are the greatest. The old Entrance standard was good in its day, but it was and is too low a standard to complete a general education for any class in our Province.

The obligatory courses provided are very extensive and good, but perhaps too rigid. I observe, with pleasure, that optional courses may be taken up with the consent of parents and principals. Often a farmer's son wants to prepare for a profession, and, in order to do that, Latin may be required; but, being too far from High Schools, and too poor to afford the expense, he could not go. It is needless to say that the best men in the professions, often the very flowers, come from the rural homes. Now, at least, the opportunity is theirs. Very wisely, great latitude is allowed to school inspectors and trustees in choosing optional subjects and in teaching these.

In the new regulations, great emphasis has been placed on equipment, accommodation, laboratories, blackboards, desks, heating and lighting, and ventilation. The grants are so adjusted in detail that everything has to be carefully provided. Then, if one adds to this equipment, the opportunities that rural districts afford in the way of ornamentation and decoration, and in the cultivation of school gardens, one need but reflect

a moment to see that there is "no school like the old rural school"—"Keep green the dear old spot." Will not such schools anchor the boys and girls to the old neighborhood? Will they not arouse in the people an appreciation for good schools, good education—yea, for some culture? Need I mention that the minimum values of the library equipment for one- or two-teacher schools is \$150, and for a three-teacher school is \$300? This of itself must do great good amongst the rural classes. Of course, much depends on the teachers, trustees, and inspectors.

I cannot close this letter without noticing how these schools are to be inspected, for on that I place the supreme emphasis. I believe that school inspection has been, in six cases out of ten, an expensive farce to this Province for years. This is not to be the case any longer, and Dr. Seath deserves the highest credit for his efforts so far in this special department. It must apply, however, equally to Separate Schools and the ordinary public schools; and, unless the inspectors are abler men, and all qualified, how can the standard of education be elevated?

The regulations for Continuation Classes make much of inspection. The fact is, Mr. Cowley's position is no sinecure. He co-operates with the local county inspector, and correlates all the inspection and work of these schools. The autonomy of the local inspector is respected, and he works in with the continuation inspector in such a way as to strengthen the Department in the administration of the schools. In a case where a school board or council is to be convinced, educated into and brought to understand its privileges under these schools (and its duties after having adopted the system), the two inspectors, representing the central and local authority both, are a power in leading and advising the people. In addition, the Department is kept in living touch with every inspectorate where there is a Continuation Class.

One cannot read the regulations without seeing here and there the signs of that harmony in detail and organization among the leaders, the Superintendent and Inspector, so necessary to progress. The main point in these schools, if they are to regenerate our people, is to supply them with the right class of teachers and the right class of work. These teachers must have rural instincts, and understand rural conditions. They must study agriculture. They must have the farmer's point of view, and be able to sympathize with, and, it may be, lead him. No "namby-pamby" society man can do any good among these schools. Their courses of study must be made elastic and adaptable. But, Mr. Editor, this drives me to the Normal School again. Here our teachers are all trained, and I regret to say that the men selected to do this training are not men sufficiently alive to public opinion, not wide-awake men of public spirit, not in all cases widely enough informed on the needs of our Province for such positions. Indeed, two of them have, I believe, less than three years' experience in public schools. What a state of affairs! I fear, Mr. Editor, that some appointments cannot be defended except on political grounds.

The hope of the profession is in the Superintendent, but, alas, I fear he is far from having a free hand.
R. STOTHERS.
Ottawa.

The farmer of to-day who looks shrewdly ahead, anticipating steady increase in wages, and planning all his barns, fields and methods generally so as to eliminate unnecessary labor at every turn, and enable one man to accomplish the work of two wherever this can be done, will be laying the foundations for a sound and permanent business success, while at the same time helping to improve the condition of his hired laborer and fellow citizen. Whoever fails to do this, will find the grim spectre of world-wide competition staring him in the face.

The old homily, "There are more ways than one of skinning a cat," has found fresh exemplification in the horse-show ring this year. If you don't like the way the horses are placed, have the official veterinarians called in to make re-examination for soundness. Perhaps they may be able to find a sidebone. Never mind if all the horses have certificates of soundness. There may have been a mistake in the certificate.

Things look different from different points of view. It would also seem that they look different at different times of the day. Some horses, for instance, which pass as sound in the forenoon, may be found in the afternoon to have sidebone. It is astonishing how rapidly sidebones develop—when one is looking for them.