

system. They must be made an integral part, the core and the driving force of the new health organisation. The distinction between public health and curative medicine will then lose a good deal of its meaning. The practitioner while attending to his work will become the most potent agent of the public health authorities which need no longer appeal to the public to make use of their facilities. They will get their patients through the practitioner and the health centres. Thus there will develop in the course of time a comprehensive and co-ordinated system of health services, equally equipped for preventive and curative work, for general and specialized treatment.

Such an organization must, if it is to function properly, meet with the approval of those whom it is to serve. It must be popular in the real sense of the word. This can be best achieved by enlisting

the active cooperation of the insured population together with that of the employers and the medical profession. This proposal does not imply creation of another of those advisory committees which are so frequent in the organization of our war economy and which have in common that their advice is neither sought nor taken. It means conferring upon the people a real responsibility for the solution of a problem in which they are vitally interested. It means administrative units which are large enough to give them sufficient operational and financial strength but not so large as to make self government of the people illusory. It has been stated by the Webbs that Friendly Societies¹ have been one of the pillars of democratic government in England. It would be a pity if we should miss such a good opportunity for reviving the citizens' interest in communal affairs.

(1) Cooperative Societies for Mutual Sickness Insurance

Program For Education

By A. S. MOWAT

A Sound Foundation

THE great glory of the North American tradition in education is that from the beginning it has admitted the right of every child to free education at the public expense from kindergarten to high school. This has saved us from those vicious educational distinctions found in some European countries which are based on differences in wealth or privilege rather than merit. It has saved us from the Old School Tie, and for this we should be profoundly thankful.

This basic educational principle of ours is unshakably sound at bottom. But we have not carried it far enough nor understood its full implications. As a result numerous flaws and deficiencies have developed in the maintenance and running of our schools. But in a young

and vigorous nation they have not escaped detection, and the critics have been busy, sniping, sapping, sharpshooting and delivering plain honest straightforward frontal attacks, often against superior numbers. We already know very well what is wrong with our schools. We know that much of our educational administrative machinery is out of date, our finance sometimes haphazard; we know that many teachers have been scandalously underpaid; we know that inequalities of educational opportunity exist greater than in any other civilised country with the possible exception of the U. S. A.; we know that our planning of curricula has sometimes been hurried and uninspired; and we know that only lip-service is paid to the undoubted facts of individual differences among children. There is no province in Canada to which one or more of the above criticisms does not apply.

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In a general way they apply to all the provinces, though with varying degrees of emphasis.

Faults in Administrative Machinery

Reference to the past history of our schools proves illuminating, particularly in regard to educational administration. Although recent years have seen a great growth of our cities, most of the settlements in our vast country have been, and still are, small settlements widely separated from one another. In the days of our fathers communication between adjacent settlements was very difficult at all times of the year, and at some periods hazardous as well. In addition our fathers lacked both time and inducement to do much travelling. Yet those "poor proud homes" demanded a schooling for their children. There was only one way by which they could get it. They must get it for themselves. So in each settlement was established the roughhewn schoolhouse, built and furnished and equipped by the settlers with their own hands, controlled, financed and staffed by them alone. The tradition of independent local control thus established is still strong. It dies hard. For people hate to see any institution which they have once controlled pass from their hands. None the less it is ludicrously unfitted for an era of roads, railways, aircraft, snowploughs, busses and telephones. Local control of schools from being a help has become a hindrance to better education. The first problem now before Canadian educators is how to enlarge administrative and financial areas for education. This must be done even at the expense of destroying or abating local interest in the school, which we would none the less like to retain, and which can, moreover, be retained through a strong Home and School movement. In some parts of Canada it is good to see this change toward the larger unit of administration already under way.

Inequality of Opportunity

Local control of education has proved a hindrance to educational advance in several ways. In the first place it has

helped to produce extraordinary inequalities of educational opportunity. The size of the original local school unit (usually called the "section") was determined by the legs of little children. Thus you will still find in the school law of the provinces such phrases as "the section shall not in length or breadth exceed 5 miles." To begin with differences between sections were not very pronounced. All were poor and none had a large population. But with the development of the country striking differences soon began to appear. Some sections remained poor, others became rich; some remained thinly populated, others filled up with people. The whole fabric of society altered from a number of largely independent small units to a web of closely integrated and interdependent texture. Thus arose the educational contrast between town and country, none the less striking because so familiar. For whereas the rural school sections are for the most part compelled to be content with the one-roomed schoolhouse they have always had, urban sections are now able to build, equip and staff larger schools, finance them soundly, and carry on an elaborate and modern educational programme. Yet, in many parts of Canada, every section, urban or rural, is expected mainly or solely from its own resources to provide a complete free education for children from Grade 1 to the end of high school. The handicaps of the rural section in attempting this impossible task have often been described and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that even with the best will in the world and the best teacher in the world it cannot be satisfactorily carried out. Where there is lack of interest, poverty, or local dissension in the section, where the teacher is inexperienced or inadequately trained, things, of course, are much worse. As a rule, one might almost say as a universal rule, the child in the town or city enjoys a vastly richer and more varied educational experience, both because his teachers are more skilful and because the larger school allows the teachers to specialise. There is only one

way to remove the educational disabilities of the rural child, namely, by pooling resources, and administering a large number of sections as one. Where this has been done, it has resulted in better administration, higher salaries for teachers more regularly paid, consolidation of high-school instruction, and sometimes the use of busses to transport children to and from school. All those improvements, greatly facilitated by the adoption of the larger unit (one might almost say, impossible without it) are to be commended. We must hope and work for the extension of these benefits to all our rural children, every one of whom in a democratic country like ours should have as his birthright a fair educational chance.

There is one feature of all larger unit schemes hitherto adopted which I think ought to be mentioned. In all such Canadian schemes the towns have stayed outside the new units, each of which consists of a number of rural or village school sections. Thus while the rural children benefit greatly, the traditional antagonism between town and country still remains. This is a great pity, and leads not only to unnecessary rivalry but also in some cases to duplication of effort and minor administrative difficulties. I should like to see some province with enough vision and solidarity of purpose to organise a system of larger units arranged solely on a territorial basis and each containing one or more urban communities as well as the surrounding rural areas.

The Teaching Body

The "sectional" organisation of education has also contributed to the regrettable underpayment of many Canadian teachers. Some rural sections have been at fault through poverty; others through apathy; others through carelessness or negligence in tax collection. The results have been most harmful for rural education. It is true that among rural teachers are found many noble and self-sacrificing souls who for a pittance year after year conduct their schools with skill and en-

thusiasm. Some of them I know myself and admire from the bottom of my heart. But, generally speaking, in this world you get what you pay for, and it must be confessed that, on the whole, rural teachers tend to be less experienced and more poorly-trained than their city colleagues, the lame ducks or the birds of passage who are teaching to fill in time till something better turns up. The very careful survey of teachers' salaries issued in 1939 by the Canadian Teachers' Federation revealed a most disquieting state of affairs, which was summed up in the statement "more than half the teachers of Canada live at the lowest level of self-supporting penurious existence." Since 1939 some improvement has been effected in teachers' salaries, but they are not yet commensurate with the importance of the teaching body in society. We shall have to pay our teachers still more, and we shall have to remove the present inequalities in salaries paid for equal work done. Every province ought to have (as some have already) a scale of minimum salaries for all teachers, strictly enforced. For the teacher is by far the most important link in the educational chain. We need, of course, and in some cases need very badly, better school buildings, better text books, better courses of study, better equipment. But good teachers are more important than any of those. If we can offer better salaries regularly paid, we can demand better educated and better trained teachers, and we shall develop a stable and intelligent teaching body, the finest asset to the schools of any country.

The Need for Diversity of Courses

Another serious fault in Canadian education is the inadequate notice taken of the very great differences in intellectual level among human beings. The idea that all men are equal, like the tradition of local control, dies hard, though die it will in the face of common sense, biological investigation and psychological testing. It is moribund already, but nothing effective has yet been done anywhere on a scale fitting to the extent

and importance of the problem. It is perhaps not generally recognised how great differences in ability are. For example, five per cent of 12 year old children have reached only to the intellectual level of the average 9 year old, while another five per cent have reached the level of the average 15 year old. Similar differences exist for other degrees of difference and at all age levels. There is one and only one satisfactory way of dealing with the problems created by those differences. It is to have a point or a series of points of selection, at which children will be classified into two, three or more groups according to general ability and general proficiency at school. We already have the beginnings of this in our selection of children for auxiliary or special classes and in our selection for college by examination at the end of high school. But those touch only the fringe of the problem. We need also a point of selection about the end of Grade VI. Below such a point the same course would be given to all children excepting mental and physical defectives, but above it there would be two or more different courses suited to different levels of ability. No province in Canada provides such courses or such a point of selection. For the approach to the whole problem has been misconceived. In the old days high school education was for the few; the great majority left school after instruction in the elements of learning. The few who remained were usually able and ambitious. Under such conditions a single course of an academic type filled the bill and filled it well. But now it is the majority (not the minority) who proceed to high school, and the academic course fits only a fraction of them. For many it is a weariness of the flesh. Practical teachers were not slow to discover this, but the steps so far taken to remedy the situation have been doubly unfortunate. On the one hand there has been a tendency to water down high school courses. This has resulted in poorer preparation of those later going on to higher education in college or university. On the other hand it has

led to the introduction of a multiplicity of subjects into some high schools on the mistaken plea that differences between students are differences in *type* of ability (linguistic, mathematical, practical) rather than in *level* of ability. Such differences in type do, of course, exist, but in school organization they are of much less importance than differences in general level of ability. We need to have the same subjects studied at different levels rather than different subjects at the same level.

Vocational Education and Vocational Guidance

When this problem is overcome, the problems of vocational education and vocational guidance will fall into proper perspective. It is regrettable that the term "vocational" should be used for some courses already given in our high schools. For upon examination such courses are invariably found not to be strictly vocational, but merely to have a bias in a general way towards a certain class of vocations. It would conduce to clearer thinking if some such term as "practical" were used instead. It would then be apparent that all high school courses offered to-day are doing much the same thing, namely, against a broad background of English and Social Studies preparing in a general way for a group of occupations. Thus the academic course prepares for the professions, the commercial course for commerce and business, the so-called vocational courses for industry or agriculture. This is as it should be. With the improvement mentioned in the last paragraph our full time high schools may be safely relied upon to do their proper task, that is, to provide a diversity of courses at different levels of ability each of them leading in a general way towards a certain group of occupations.

Strictly vocational education, by which I mean education designed directly to help a man to do his job better, can only be satisfactorily carried out, I am certain, while a man is actually engaged upon his job in a practical way. To do this you must either add the school to the job,

or the job to the school. In the first case employees are released from work at stated times in order to be given instruction; in the second, high school students are released from school for stated periods to go to work. Both methods have been tried, but the first seems the more generally applicable. We should look forward to a great expansion of such education in rural as well as urban areas.

It is obvious also that a great extension of vocational guidance is highly desirable. This means a great development of standardised educational and vocational tests, accompanied by careful research upon them, and a closer cooperation of our educational services with employers, employees, and employment bureaus. In addition we shall have to train a whole tribe of vocational counsellors whose job it will be to help each young person to find the life work best suited to him or her.

The Art of Democratic Living

It cannot, however, be emphasised too strongly that in a democratic society young people and old alike need something more than merely vocational education. Under a dictatorship the cement that holds society together may be the Party or the Secret Police or the propaganda machine. In a democracy it can only be the goodwill and understanding existing among all sections of the population. We must take especial care therefore to see that such understanding and goodwill be developed and fostered at all stages in our educational system. I would go further and say that we should help also in developing it between nations. For Canada this means teaching conversational French to English speaking Canadians, and conversational English to French speaking Canadians; it means closer intimacy with the culture and history of the U. S. A.; it means the extension of such movements as Youth

Hostels and folk dancing; it means easier travel and more frequent interchange of pupils from province to province and with other countries; it means extension and coordination of our Adult Education organizations; above all it means the diffusion not so much of knowledge (though that is not unimportant) but of inspiration and of ideals of living, not imposed upon our citizenry nor blindly accepted, but moulded, developed and lived by them. Such developments might be expected to do for Canada what the folk high school movement did for Denmark, produce a healthy, thinking, cooperative, enterprising, well-informed and highly cultured people.

By now it must be evident that this article is simply a plea for more and better education in Canada. This means we shall have to spend more on education, and spend it to better advantage. It also means that we shall have to find and develop educational leaders. The natural forcing ground for such leaders seems to me to be the university, and I think that the universities must come to realise the production of such leaders as one of their most important tasks. What changes this would entail in university life we cannot now discuss except to say that it implies stress on general culture rather than on specialisation. The most serious single obstacle to the production of such leaders is however the fact that at present many students able and willing to profit by a university education are denied it on the quite irrelevant ground that they are unable to bear the expense. It is sincerely to be hoped that the Dominion government which has so generously contracted to finance the further education of university undergraduates now in the forces, will continue some similar scheme in peace-time as an aid to needy students. By so doing the whole intellectual and cultural life of the nation could be elevated and enriched.