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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Island High School Program Is Varied

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A VISIT to perhaps a half dozen Regional High Schools left me wondering what our forefathers would say if they could come back long enough to see some of those well equipped buildings and talk to some of the principals and teachers as I did in a couple of trips recently.

I don't know what my grandparents would think, or even my parents, if they could come back for a look at the modern version of a rural regional high school, but I do know that their grandson and son was impressed. There's no more comparison between those schools and the one I attended in Rose Valley, for example, than there is between many of the other things of my boyhood days, and the present.

Without attempting to assess the educational competence of the new institutions – I found the principals as proud of their system as most people are of the splendid buildings that house them – I was struck most forcibly, I believe, by the fact that Island high school pupils now have this educational opportunity available to them as close as their own gate, or the corner, or some other spot, just up the road a bit.

### High School Opportunities

IT'S THAT close because school buses pick up the pupils there, take them to the high school and bring them back again in the evening.

If any reader is not impressed by that fact, it means only that he or she didn't live through the days – and they're not so far away in time – when hundreds of rural pupils never were able to go past Grade 10, because their people couldn't afford to send them to Prince of Wales College, or to St. Dunstan's high school. Now a high school education is available for free. Of course nothing is free, we have to pay for it, but it is free to the pupil who resides in a participating district so far as any immediate cash outlay is concerned.

I had already seen something of the facilities available at the Charlottetown Rural High School – I've worked there on counselling projects – and several times I have been in several other high schools. This time I visited and talked with the people who direct the programs in Morell, Souris, Kensington, O'Leary and the Evangeline High School in Abrams Village.

Principal Charlie McIsaac – he comes from Westmoreland, near French's Carding Mills where we took our wool when I was a youngster – showed me around at Morell.

### Program Seen Well Rounded

I WAS struck by the well rounded program that's available at those regional schools. Morell won the Kings County debating league last year – Mel McQuaid, Souris is president – and “we hope to have an Island league in future,” Mr. McIsaac said. They've won the Provincial Senior B basketball title at Morell for two years, I believe, and “some of our best students are on our basketball team”, reported the principal, who is sold on the all around approach to a youngster's education.

I know there are people who oppose the idea of physical education being taught in schools. It's natural for a farmer, or someone else who works hard physically, to discount the value of physical education, exercise, because he finds it difficult to get enough physical energy to last through his day. That reaction I can understand. I was born and raised on a farm. I was taking a man's place when I was still a mere stripling in years. But later in life I came to appreciate the value of physical education properly taught. It builds physiques and strengthens muscles that do not get proper development on a farm or at other labor, and my farming was done in the days when almost everything was done by manpower, and horse power, and I don't mean the horsepower that comes in tractors or electric motors. I believe they're looking forward to adding a course in agriculture at Souris next fall.

Commercial courses, home economics and classes in family living, preparation of food, selection of suitable clothing are some of the other useful skills and aptitudes that are being developed in some of those schools. At Souris, for example, Mother St. Augusta has her master's degree in family living education and her bachelor's degree in food science. Adequate library space is provided and in several schools this development is well underway.

Not surprisingly some people oppose what they call “those newfangled ideas”. They contrast them unfavorably with what our parents called “the three R's” but Principal Albert Fogerty at Souris is sold on the value of this type of training.

### Guidance Counselling Coming

NEXT YEAR he hopes to add a full time guidance counsellor. Special attention is planned for the graduating class. A few days ago M. F. (Matt) Hagen told me that he is doing guidance counselling already for the students attending the Charlottetown Regional High School. It thrilled me to hear of this development, for I recall distinctly the tremendous need we felt back more than 30 years ago when students entering university needed advice of that kind so desperately. But there just wasn't any such counselling available then. Nobody was interested enough to provide it.

It was a particular pleasure to meet an old Prince of Wales classmate, Jim Murphy, at Kensington where he is principal of the regional high school. The value of milk is stressed at the Kensington school and Principal Murphy told me he does not allow soft drink vending machines in the building. There is some talk, I understand, of extending the milk program next year.

Illness disrupted the teaching staff the day I called and I didn't feel like taking much of Jim's time, for he was unusually busy.

Principal Earl Jelly did the honors at O'Leary where he was one of the men involved in backing the first effort in the province to develop a regional high school, he told me. Evangeline was the first district to get into operation. The problem of winter road travel

was one of the arguments used by those who feared the regional school idea wouldn't work. But Mr. Jelly told me, for example, they lost only three teaching days at O'Leary last winter. It was one of the better ones for highway travel, but even the worst winters since the regional school system was established did not offer insurmountable problems.

### Evangeline Students Are Bilingual

AT EVANGELINE I met and actually talked with the students in several classes. I was happy to learn the school is completely bilingual. The students write essays in both English and French, the principal, Sister Marie Jeanne d'Arc, told me, though English is spoken in the classroom much of the time. French is the native tongue of most of the students there, but there are some whose mother language is English.

There were classes for retarded children in one or two schools – Souris was one of them – with a specially trained teacher. So the effort is to serve every need that develops, in so far as is possible.

I'll go along with those who complain that too much money was spent on some of the buildings. I'm old enough to feel that some of the modern grandeur goes a bit farther than is necessary. But I'm happy to see the improvement in the facilities for education, and in the provision of more easily available high school instruction. The establishment of the regional high school system means no boy or girl is robbed of a high school opportunity because it costs too much.

I know that the parents, indeed all of the taxpayers, are paying for it. My own school taxes at Southport, for example, are slightly more than twelve and one-half times as great as they were when I moved to the district just 20 years ago. That doesn't mean that taxes have increased that much, for there have been additions and improvements to our property, but the tax increase has been great.

Our family is now beyond the district and regional high school stage, but we're not kicking about the cost. So long as educational opportunities are being improved, and progress is being made towards the goal of equal educational opportunity for all, I'll go along with the development. There's no comparison between today's facilities and the ones my generation experienced.

My thanks to Supervisor Wilson Ross who arranged for the tour of regional schools – sorry I couldn't have seen more of them – and to the principals and other people whose friendly co-operation made my experience so enjoyable.