

Widening Educational Horizons

Some weeks ago this column published a review of Dr. Neatby's book, "So Little for the Mind," by Bramwell Chandler, M.A., of the Carnegie Libraries, Charlottetown.

In order to give the different views of opposing philosophies of education, we now offer to our reading public the script of a CBC talk by Miller MacLure, M.A., Ph.D.

Dr. MacLure was born at Forest Hill, Prince Edward Island and is a graduate of Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown, in which institution he later taught for two years.

After receiving his B.A. degree from Acadia, he spent a year at John Hopkins University. His M.A. he obtained from Queen's, and his Ph.D. from Toronto.

For four years, Dr. MacLure was head of the English Department at Winnipeg United College. Before obtaining his present position as English teacher at Victoria College, Toronto, Dr. MacLure took post-graduate studies at Harvard University and did several months of research in England.

(The views presented in this article, by permission of the CBC, do not necessarily represent those of the Teachers' Federation)

most Canadians as a member of the Massey Commission, has written a book with the bitter and challenging title, "So Little For the Mind."

It is a brilliant attack on the whole theory and practice of "progressive" education in the English-speaking schools of this country, and it's going to be a tough one for the educational experts to answer.

Dr. Neatby demonstrates how the Canadian educational systems have come under the control of administrators, inspectors, and teacher-training experts who are imbued with the educational ideas of the American philosopher, John Dewey. She examines their theories of "socialized learning" through "co-operative activities," and how these theories are applied in the normal schools and in the classrooms of the elementary and secondary schools of nine provinces. Her conclusion is that this approach to education promotes illiteracy, boredom, normal slackerism and immaturity in the children exposed to it, that it is even actively anti-intellectual. Worst of all, while it pretends to be "education for democracy," it is really a process of conditioning which may rightly be called totalitarianism.

Her method is simple—and deadly. Having collected the programs of study from the provinces, and examined the professional journals and public utterances of the deputy ministers, curriculum experts, educational psychologists, etc., she quotes from these documents, with appropriate comments, letting her opponents convict themselves out of their own mouths. She has smitten the experts with their own jaw-bones, and the bodies are scattered all around. Let me quote you one or two choice bits, and ask you to bear in mind that the authors of these statements are in charge of the education of your children.

First, on reading, about which graduates of Teacher's College Columbia have written reams of gobbledegook. Here is a sample:

"Because reading may be influenced by so many diverse factors, an analysis of any person's failure to read must necessarily take into consideration the history of the individual, his age, intelligence, physical condition (particularly with respect to sensory and motor deviations), emotional drives and interest, language abilities and a specific analysis of any weakness in the reading skills."

As Miss Neatby observes, Oh for the good old days when you could read or you couldn't.

Then, on the distrust of subject-matter, the deep-seated fears of facts which these experts display:

"The aim of the school is not so much to teach the pupils all the facts they have not yet mastered as to hasten into action all the desirable behaviour they have not yet attained."

Or this one:

"The chief aim of the school is moral character, and... mastery of subject matter is of secondary importance."

Parents and clergy, relax! The church will do your work for you. The high school graduate may not know much, but he will be chock-full of desirable moral attitudes. In other words, he'll be conditioned! It will take twelve years and cost an awful lot of money, but he'll be a whiz with plasticine and out-puts, and if he's gone to a really advanced composite school, he'll be able to use the telephone and the typewriter and even to drive the family car.

Finally, on the question of standards and aims, these two remarks: "We have no objection to standards, so long as they are not fixed."

And this: "It seems unnecessary to call attention to the obvious truth that too great emphasis upon

associations do not wish to see the professional prestige of teachers lowered by watering down admission, training, and certification requirements.

Secretaries of school trustees' associations do not wish to see expensive shop and home economics equipment lying idle, nor do they wish to see children absent from school because of an under supply of teachers.

The heads of teacher training institutions do not wish to introduce lowered admission requirements nor reduce the standards in teacher-training programs. Curriculum directors of Provincial Departments of Education do not wish incompetent, incompletely or poorly-trained personnel to attempt to interpret the carefully-designed programs of studies drawn up by hard-working curriculum sub-committees of teachers and expert consultants.

Chief superintendents of schools in Provincial Departments of Education do not wish to see schools closed because of a lack of teachers.

The introduction in Western Canada and possibly in the Dominion of Canada of a Standard Certificate, either regionally or nationally, would do much to professionalize teachers, and would really be a step in the right direction. The issuance of certificates by Provincial Departments of Education would in no way interfere with local certification in certain fields; nor would it impede such measures as special license, or interim certificates being issued by each of the provinces in order to meet crises similar to that through which we are now passing.

Every person in every part of Canada should concede that a teacher training and teacher service constitute the most important factors in maintaining our democratic way of life.

Democracy is based on three important tenets. One, the supreme importance of the individual; two, mutual respect and co-operation between individuals of all persons.

The third tenet suggests, the importance of educating all persons to the full limit of their talents, provided they are all willing to co-operate. This is true at the rural, urban, provincial, national commonwealth and world levels.

Education is our way of survival. Education is the best bulwark against the gains of communism and demagogues. Education is the best way to maintain our moral, spiritual, and cultural standards. Education is the best way of carrying out the Christian ideal of the Golden Rule in action.

A uniform Standard Certificate across Canada would tend to place teacher training and the whole business of education in its proper perspective. It is no use merely talking about its importance. A significant Canadian teacher certificate is an effective means of recognizing the all-important function of teaching in our society. If we closed our schools and eliminated teachers, our society would degrade to the level of that which existed in primitive times. Our youth develop the minds of our youth and in this way guarantee the retention of our democratic civilization.

A National Standard Certificate should be based on a minimum of two years of training in a teacher-education institution, after the achievement of senior matriculation into a recognized provincial university. Anything less than this is skimpy and shoddy.

The profession of teaching consists of more than merely school keeping. To develop a sound professional background and outlook, teachers must be educated, not trained. Training suggests a circus business of knowing a bag of tricks.

Teacher education, on the other hand, is based on the following solid foundation of education:

- (1) Educational sociology—a study of school and society.
- (2) Educational psychology—a study of child growth and behaviour.
- (3) Educational philosophy—a study of the relation of education to our way of life.
- (4) Educational history.
- (5) Educational research.
- (6) Educational methodology—a study of general methods of classification and handling of subject matter content.

The professional side of teaching is more than merely holding class from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Teachers must view education in its broad, social implications. For complete teacher education, a four year Bachelor of Education program is necessary, after which time, teachers should be granted a professional certificate. The task of teaching is too important to expect anything less. A minimum of education should consist of a two-year program based on senior matriculation.

Each province should acknowledge the respective teacher-education program of all other provinces. A Standard Certificate, duly recognized as the minimum goal for good teacher training is logically sound, however, due to the critical teacher shortage each province may find it expedient to set up special licenses, or short courses in training. Such measures are not to be interpreted as approbation of reduced standards.

National certification within the existing framework of the local autonomy of provincial education authorities is a definite possibility. Our society must become aware of the fact that teaching is the most important function in our culture. The public is slow to react to slogans like "Teachers Mould Our Nation's Future." Teachers are not a race apart. Their work merits respectability. A National Standard Certificate, based on four years of preparation, and a National Professional Certificate, based on four years of study, will bring prestige and honour to teachers.

Excerpts from an address on NATIONAL STANDARD OF TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN CANADA

by Dr. A. L. Doucette, Director of the Calgary Branch University of Alberta.

There is a critical shortage of teachers in the whole of the Dominion of Canada. There is definite concern that hundreds of schools will be closed by the fall of 1955, despite the commonly heard slogan of "equal educational opportunity for all Canadian youth."

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IMPRESSIONS OF DANISH EDUCATION

By VERA HANSON

(Taken from the ATA Magazine)

I had just finished my first day of substitute teaching in a modern Danish school. On my way out of the door shortly after two o'clock I noticed a group of boys lingering in the school yard. They were waiting to walk home with me. Eagerly they gathered round, brimming over with questions they had not been able to ask me during the morning classes. "Do the Indians still scalp people over there?" they asked.

Most of my time spent in Denmark was spent in Horsens, a city fully situated on an east coast fjord. Here I was given the privilege of actually teaching in two different schools. Being an Alberta teacher, I was interested to learn at first hand more about the educational system of Denmark. Accordingly I seized every opportunity to visit the schools in various parts of the country.

These visits supplemented the ones I had made to the classes over the years ago. At that time I had listened to their oral examinations, open to the public. I had examined the extensive displays of sewing, woodwork and other projects which were shown at promotion time.

The school system itself should be explained. After five years in the primary school, the pupil may continue without an examination in the "folkeskole" where he may get three years of general education and then stop. Or he may take an examination which will admit him to the secondary school where he may study for three years and write another examination. Passing this, he may take a one-year "real-skole" course followed by another examination. From here many of the students go directly into offices or get jobs with business firms. Others go on from secondary school into a grammar school or gymnasium course of four years, leading to university entrance.

I formed the impression that Danish country teachers are secure, contented and independent. They usually spend the greater part of their lives in one community, where they are respected citizens.

Every year the headmaster of a village school I know takes the older students on a tour to some part of Denmark. One year the trip takes them to Copenhagen itself, with all its many sights. The next year they travel to some other interesting place to spend a week. This summer he and his assistants arranged for twenty-five of the pupils to spend a week on the island of Bornholm. They travelled by train and boat, and, needless to say, they arrived home with a wealth of material for social studies, note-books and experience to enjoy for many months. Excursions such as this are an accepted part of Danish school life.

Many young people do not have the opportunity to continue school because they are needed at home on the farms during part of the year. For their benefit there are "After" schools which they may attend during the winter for more knowledge of arithmetic, literature, history, religion, sewing and cooking. Physical education always plays an important part. These are a kind of folk high school for adolescents, state-supported. I attended a display of one of these schools. First came a display of physical training in the garden, the accompaniment of music. Then followed the folk dance, in the costume of the district, accompanied by a fiddler atop his barrel. Next we examined the canning, baking and handiwork done by the girls.

My first assignment as a substitute teacher was in a private school in Horsens. This school includes primary, secondary and "real-skole" levels. The enrollment is around 425, averaging about 25 pupils per class. Classes begin at 8 a.m. and continue till 2 p.m., Saturday's included. Each period lasts one hour. There is a long break at eleven for a small lunch which the children bring from home and eat in their rooms. Teachers also have a snack and coffee. During the recess period after lunch the teachers take supervision by turns.

I found myself in charge of the girls' physical education, which is a very important part of the curriculum of all Danish schools. Sometimes I had five classes a day, ranging from the primary children to the older girls from the senior schools. The exercises I gave proved interesting to them and in return I gathered some fresh ideas for my own classes.

Occasionally I took charge of classes. The subjects taught include reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, language and composition, history, geography, and nature study. Writing is taught formally and carefully. Notebooks are carefully kept. No untidy work is tolerated. Much of the drawing is free and original. The children often have assignments in reading and arithmetic to do at home.

At Søndermarkskolen I had the opportunity of seeing one of the three most modern schools in Denmark, planned to accommodate 1000 children. A fine big staff room provides for the comfort of the teachers. A small separate kitchen

is furnished with all necessary equipment. The principal himself is furnished with an attractive office as well as a home on the ground. I spent a morning with the school psychologist at this school. This lady is in charge of classes for mentally deficient children throughout the city. Besides her own office she has a small testing room and also a waiting room with free pamphlets for the parents. The children are selected on the advice of their teachers, after considerable testing, and have an I.Q. below 70.

Aarhus University is a very modern establishment attended by over 1700 students. The auditorium itself is well worth a visit. It is 65 feet high and has fine acoustics. It seats 700 on piskin covered chairs and spotted calfskin sofas. Behind the stage is a great window overlooking the beautiful park-like grounds and the university residences. The summer porch, with its high windows and vine-covered yellow brick, is popular with the students. The open-air floor for dancing and the open-air theatre are used on various occasions. In the kitchen, one woman and a helper prepare the great kettles with potatoes and vegetable soup for the students who have their meals in the cafeterias.

There are a number of kindergarten schools in the capital as well. The one I visited accepts children aged two-and-a-half to seven whose mothers work during the day. There is no special program. The day is spent in walking, playing and sleeping, with time in between for meals and milk. The children have their meals at long tables in groups of twelve. Tables and chairs and toys are standard equipment. Beds are stored away in the wall and can be pulled out two at a time. Regular doctor's visits are a part of the programme. Two of the staff have the full two-years' training required; the rest are assistants.

The International People's College is located on the edge of Hamlet's ancient town. Mr. Jones, the English lecturer, a negro from Washington, D. C., showed us through the classrooms. Often, he said, there are two to three hundred students, many of them Swedish but also many from other lands.

A young Frenchman whom I met later in my travels had spent six months at this school. He told me that those were the best six months of his life—the comradeship of students from different nations means more than anything else. Surely this should be a force for international goodwill, friendship, and peace in the world.

The impressions I carried home from the Danish schools have given me a new faith in the power

of education. I learned much and have, as a result, a new enthusiasm. The methods of teaching are comparatively formal, but they produce results. From the time they begin the children enjoy school and expect to do their share by completing assigned work at home. They are usually polite and well-behaved because they are taught respect at home and obedience at school. The teachers are highly trained men and women of good character who understand children. They are contented in their work because they are respected by the parents and able to enjoy a satisfactory standard of living.

THE ISLAND OF BARBADOS

A most important step forward in the island's steady constitutional progress was made on February 1, 1954, when the ministerial system was introduced in Barbados. The constitution of Barbados is one of the oldest in the Commonwealth, having its origin in a Charter granted in 1652. Prior to

February 1, the legislature consisted of the Governor, a Legislative Council of 15 members, appointed by Her Majesty, and a House of Assembly of 24 members elected for five years by adult suffrage. Executive power was vested in the Governor and the Executive Council and, in most matters, in an Executive Committee. The Governor held no positive reserve powers and in legislative matters the island was close to self-government.

Under the new arrangements, the Governor appoints as Premier the person who appears best able to command a majority in the House of Assembly, and appoints four other Ministers on the Premier's recommendation. The first Premier is Mr. G. H. Adams, a lawyer of African descent who for some years has been leader of the Labour Party, which at present commands a majority in the House of Assembly.

These five Ministers, who will be full-time and salaried, take the place of the four House members

(Continued on page 8)



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