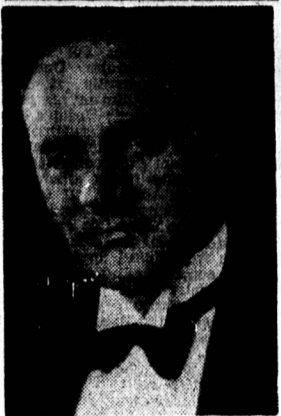


Stresses Important Trends In Rural Education In PEI

Noting that the trend in rural education in this province in recent years has included improvement in school buildings and equipment, sanitary facilities, additional teacher training and vocational education, Dr. L. W. Shaw yesterday warned the P. E. I. Teachers Federation that this was not enough.



Dr. L. W. Shaw
Deputy Minister of Education

"If we are to overcome some of the weaknesses still apparent in our programme and if we are to extend and enlarge this programme to the end that all our pupils both elementary and secondary may have education suited to their needs," the Deputy Minister of Education stated, "we should give immediate attention to the establishing of larger units of administration and composite high schools in these larger units."

The Whole Problem

"It does," he stated, "if the whole problem of providing adequate educational facilities is considered, for this problem will include administration of the one room school, the number of grades to be taught by one teacher, the provision of teachers trained for rural school conditions and the provision of a programme or curriculum so constructed and administered that the rural children and youth may have equal opportunity, both on the elementary and high school levels, with those from larger and wealthier centres."

"Education in rural communities presents many problems entirely distinct from the problems concerned with urban schools. Prince Edward Island can be looked upon as a community almost wholly rural, therefore, the educational problems are very largely rural problems."

The second observation with reference to our subject might be: "This Province has always been rural and we have always had this problem. Does it differ today from the problem in past years?" Again the answer is that it does differ because conditions and circumstances differ from those of the past. For example, let us look at our school attendance. In 1889, the year of the highest enrolment in our history, there were enrolled in the schools of the Province 23,045 pupils. The average daily attendance was 13,150 or 57.1 per cent of those enrolled. For the year 1950-51, there were fewer pupils enrolled—18,468—but there was an average daily attendance of 15,310 or 82.9 per cent. This regularity of attendance in itself constitutes a change of conditions.

Longer In School

The fact, too, that pupils are remaining longer in school changes conditions in the school and its

cannot otherwise be provided. "Let us see how this form of administration is being received. Here is a paragraph from the last Annual Report of the Department of Education in Saskatchewan, a province which as you know is largely rural: 'During the past six or seven years the Larger School Unit has been generally accepted by the people of this province as an improved system of school administration. The greater degree of equalization of educational costs and the improved educational facilities which are apparent in their operation, together with able management by unit boards, have been convincing evidence of the improvement achieved by this system of administering our schools.'

"Now a paragraph from the last Ontario report: 'In recent years there has been a definite trend in the province toward a reduction in the number of administrative units for the elementary schools. The formation of 536 areas in existence at the end of 1950 has involved the dissolution of 3,469 former school sections.'

"A brief statement from Manitoba: 'The operation of the Dauphin-Ochre School Area No. 1 continued to demonstrate the value of the larger unit of administration in providing superior educational services. The standard of the one-room school has been improved and the composite high school has continued to grow in size and has attracted an ever-increasing number of students from the rural areas.'

"And just one other from British Columbia: where in 1946 by act of the Legislature the 650 small school districts were abolished and 74 large areas were organized each under a single school Board. The 1946-47 report of the Department states as follows: 'The new organization is unquestionably much superior to the old one. Great benefits both educational and financial were immediately apparent particularly with respect to the operation of the small rural school.'

"We could quote from other Departmental reports but perhaps these are sufficient to show the general attitude towards the Larger Unit of Administration. It seems to be favourable from the standpoint of efficiency in administration and in the provision of a better school service."

Education Under Fire

"Let us look at the larger unit idea having in mind some of our

own special problems. In common with other provinces, education in Prince Edward Island has been under fire because our schools, so it is said, have deteriorated in the fundamental activities of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. It is said that the recent product of our schools is unable to read or write or spell. In this connection, I should like to quote from the Annual School Report of 1911 as prepared by the late Dr. Alexander Anderson.

"In a paragraph dealing with matriculation or entrance examinations, Dr. Anderson says in part: 'The examiners reported a decided falling off in neatness, accuracy, spelling, writing and arithmetic.' "And this reminds us that about two weeks ago a radio commentator referred to a recent report of the president of one of our largest Canadian universities. In this report it was stated that students entering the university today are terribly deficient in their ability to read, write and spell. The commentator went on to say that in 1901 a former president of the same university made the same accusation against the students of that day and in almost the same words. Is this just a matter of history repeating itself or can it be that in the early years of the present century a slump occurred in education in Canada from which we have never recovered?"

"All down through the ages since the days of Plato we have heard similar criticism. After many years experience in the schools and colleges and Departments of Education in this and other provinces, I am not prepared to say that the product of our schools has deteriorated, but I do deplore the fact that our schools have not improved more than they have. I have referred to that repeatedly in annual reports of the department, and these references have

been made, not merely as a matter of opinion, but after personal contact with the schools and after using tests in our schools that have been used in the schools of every province in Canada.

"Now if our schools have not improved as they should since the beginning of the century and I am quite prepared to admit that, while they have improved, they have not improved as they should have done, let us look at some of the possible causes. The teachers of course are never free from criticism and naturally the Department of Education receives much of this criticism either verbally or by letter. We hear from parents and trustees that teachers are too young and immature, that they themselves do not know well the work they are trying to teach, nor do they know how to organize and teach it.

In an effort to meet these criticisms, which experience has shown to be justified, we are today asking our prospective teachers to take one full year of general education beyond Grade 10 (this is a year less than is required in any other province in Canada) and then to take another year in which they will take further English, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Drawing, etc. but with emphasis on the planning and organization of classes and lessons and the teaching of these school subjects.

"This, as I have said, is a year less than is required in any other province of Canada but it is considered to be too long by some, especially by parents who have boys or girls in, or about to enter the teacher training classes. These latter feel that one year beyond Grade 10 should be sufficient for both general and professional

Continued on page 11

Conflict of Opinion

Personals

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This column is reserved for news of local interest, but advertising of a newsy nature may be inserted at five cents a word, strictly payable in advance.

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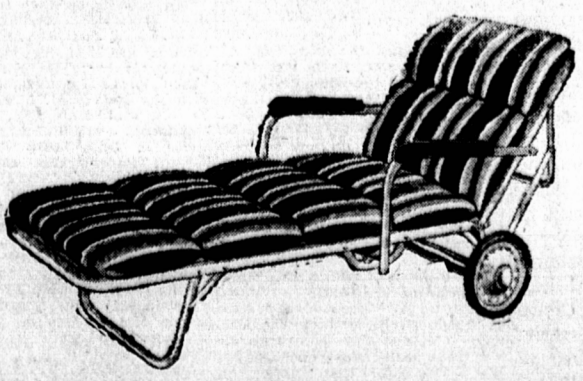
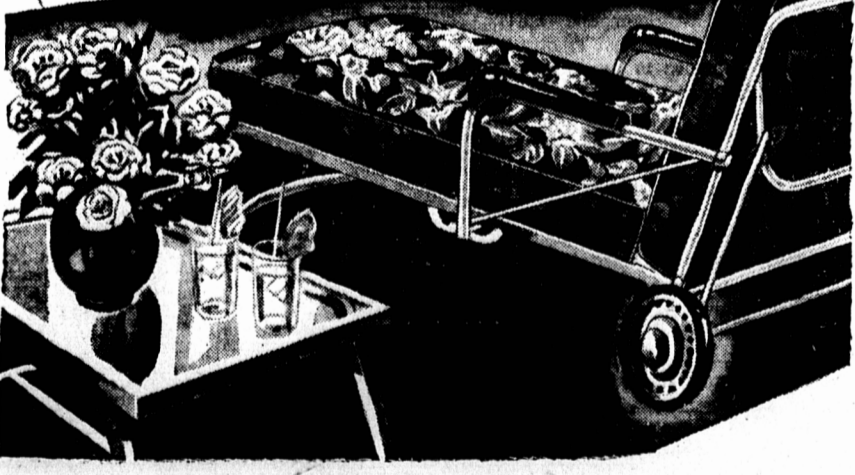
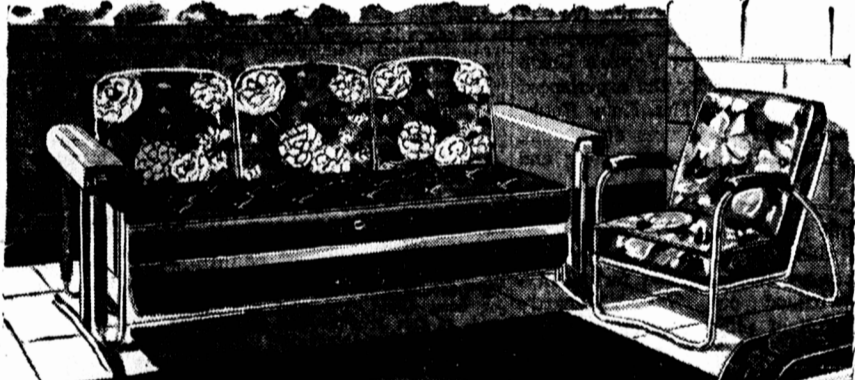
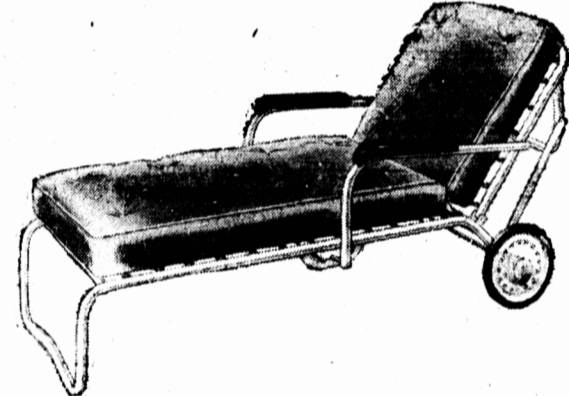
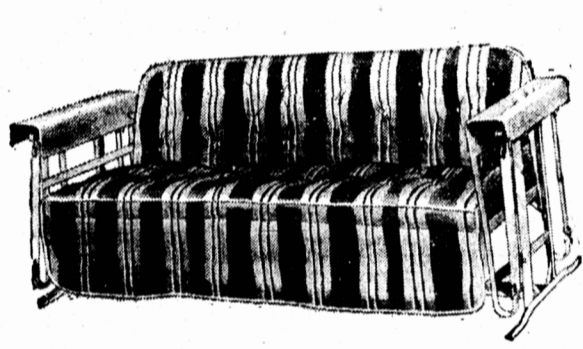
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There is no death! The stars go down
To rise upon some other shore.
And bright in heaven's jewelled crown,
They shine forevermore.

And all things, that for growth or joy,
Are worthy of our love or care,
Whose loss has left us desolate,
Are safely garnered there.

Though life become a desert waste,
We know its fairest flowers
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Sadly Missed by Her Husband.

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