

## TEACHER'S SALARIES ON P. E. I.

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The salaries and the treatment which our teachers on Prince Edward Island receive are discouraging both to those who wish to remain in the profession and to those who would like to become teachers.

In the early years of settlement here schools were few and far between. Those living far from a school were obliged to educate their children at home as best they could. As the population grew, the people, seeing the need of more schools, erected them and the government contributed to the salaries of the teachers.

At first it was necessary to attend an institution of learning other than public school for half a year in order to get a licence. This is called to-day a third class license, and is no longer granted or used by anyone. Now one must have a second class license which could be obtained until a year ago by completing the course in Grade XI at Prince of Wales College and including in it teacher-training. For the government of the province, desiring a higher standard among its teachers, has required those wishing to become teachers to finish high school where previously one year was all that was necessary.

The teaching profession is a very worthy vocation, but when it is so easy to enter into this profession, it becomes a stepping stone for those who have other ambitions. This should not be so, for teaching, like every other vocation, is not suited to everyone. Credit should be given the provincial government then, for taking this step to elevate the standard of its teachers.

But even as it is, the standard in Prince Edward Island is the lowest of all the provinces of Canada. The government has made an effort to raise this, but it has made no



move to increase the salaries of teachers. Furthermore, it costs just twice as much to obtain a license now, as it did two years ago, but the pay for teachers remains the same. Is there, then, anything to entice a person to become a teacher, or hold those who are in the profession?

Two years ago there were over two teachers for every classroom on the Island. The majority of them were teachers because there was nothing else for them to do; and if they were fortunate enough to get a position as teacher, they made enough to keep themselves. Today, there are some schools closed on this same island because of a shortage of teachers. This is proof that there was nothing to hold them to their *positions* and that their hearts were not in their work. For as soon as the opportunity came for them to better themselves, they took advantage of it by throwing up their work and procuring better-paying jobs.

But what is the salary of a teacher here on our fair isle? It is a law of the province that the teacher's supplement, that is the amount voted by the school district for the teacher, must not go below \$25 for the year. It is a law that the government pay the teacher according to the class of supplement. From \$25 to \$75 is considered a third class supplement, and the government pays \$250 to female teachers and \$325 to males; from \$75 to \$100 is second class, and the government pays \$325 to females and \$407 to males. From \$100 upward is considered first class, and the government pays \$412 to females and \$500 to males. It can be inferred from this that the government judges the district capable of knowing the worth of its teachers and sets the salary according to the class of the teacher. But a district usually votes its supplement for the year before knowing who the teacher is going to be. It must be then, that the government uses this means to induce the district to vote a good supplement, which the district in many cases fails to do. The teacher suffers here, for even if he holds a first class license he may receive only



third class pay. The fact that the supplement in general shows an increase in the past few years is a result of the efforts of the Teachers' Federation of this province.

And what do these conditions lead to? They lead to a lax attitude in the teachers who do not receive the pay which their class of license entitles them to. They see no reason why they should exert themselves, when any extra effort on their part is not even appreciated, to say nothing of its being paid for.

But the government pays the teachers more in proportion to their total salary than any other province. It shoulders most of the burden for public education, while in other provinces, especially in Western Canada, the greater load falls on those who pay taxes to support the school. All this is of little consolation to the teacher here. It is no concern of his where the money comes from; he is interested in the amount he receives.

But now let us consider the further ill treatment the teachers undergo at the hands of the government. This government wisely saw that there must be a way to make the children attend school. Here is the plan it worked out for doing it: If the average attendance of pupils in the district for the year goes below 60 per cent, the teacher suffers a reduction in his pay for that deficiency. In other words if John is kept home by his parents to pick potatoes, and Tom is too far from the school to get there every day, and Peter has no shirt fit to wear to school and therefore stays home, and a dozen others stay home when they feel like it and are not forced by their parents to go, then, as a result of all these things, the average falls short of 60 per cent, and the teacher suffers by forfeiting some of his pay. Apparently, then, the teacher is supposed to see to it that someone else picks John's potatoes for him, that there is a way provided for Tom to get to school every day, that Peter has a shirt, and the dozen others come to school, if necessary, under the persuasion of a switch.



There is an excuse for those who are sick, and no deduction will be made in the pay, provided that the teacher's annual report to the Board of Education, at the end of the year, is accompanied by a paper from the family doctor, asserting that Bill's absence from school was a result of illness. This means simply that the teacher is given much extra trouble.

Now it must also be admitted that the public school act gives teachers authority to sue the parents of any children who are the cause of deficiency in average through their own fault. But parents who allow their children to stay home for no reason or keep them home for little reason, are generally those who live a hand to mouth existence, and have not two pennies to rub together. What can be collected from such people in court or outside of it? And, even if the bill could be collected from some, it would mean more extra trouble for the teacher to get what is already due him, for he is hired to teach all the pupils of the district.

Again, the government must see to it that the district holds up its end of the burden of supporting the teacher. How is this done? When the teacher sends in his annual report at the end of the school year, he must state the amount of supplement that he is supposed to receive from the district, and also the amount that he has already received. If these two figures do not correspond, that is, if he has not received the full amount due him from the district, then a part of his pay is withheld by the government in proportion to the amount still owed him by the district until such time as he receives it from the district. Again the teacher acts the goat for the government, so that its wishes may be fulfilled.

The government cannot permit payment to be made for work that has not been done. But, realizing that teachers are sometimes taken ill in spite of themselves,



it has granted half-pay for any time out due to illness, provided that the illness does not amount to more than two weeks in the year. One week's salary is the maximum for time lost, and for any time above this no additional payment is made.

Finally, The Board of Education must have a report of the annual school meeting, which takes place at the close of the school year, before a certain definite time. In order to bring this about, the government again turns to the teacher's pay roll, and has the teacher's salary withheld until the report of the meeting is in hands of the Secretary of Education. Once again the teacher is made to suffer, and this time because the secretary of the school is slow in sending in his report to the Board.

But the government has provided for its teachers who have remained at their posts for twenty years or over. A pension is granted them after the twenty year mark is reached, if they wish to retire, or they may continue teaching and receive a larger pension when they decide to retire. I have in mind now a certain teacher who is a cripple and has no means to support himself. He spent twenty years in the service and now receives \$7.50 monthly. What recompense for his labors! His pension is small because when he received his license, third class only was necessary, and he never took time out from his teaching to better his class.

To my mind a teacher who endures twenty years of teaching in the public schools of this province under the present manner in which these schools are governed is deserving of ease and comfort for the remainder of his days, and has, if we could but see it, a halo encircling his head.