

Teachers' Salaries

NO fair-minded person but will admit that our teachers are underpaid. No one will gainsay the fact that one of the most poorly paid individuals today is the teacher—that the teacher's salary is totally inadequate and by no means commensurate with the high cost of living. As a proof of this we need but listen to the merchant as he displays his goods (in many cases prohibitively priced) before teachers, and hear him say in a sympathetic tone: "You don't get much, do you?" We need but listen to clergymen who repeat so often that the teachers are miserably paid; to editors who occasionally raise their editorial voices in spasmodic efforts to secure better salaries for teachers; to politicians, even, who tell us from public platform, how sacred and noble the teacher's calling is and how worthy they are of increased salaries; and lastly (and curiously enough) to rate-payers in the different districts who, when trying to "load off" the boarding of the teacher on one another, say, in effect: "We'd board her, but she can't afford to pay much." Yes, in the eyes of many, the teacher is, by reason of the very small salary she works for, not much more than a subject for charity.

But upon some the foregoing proof will make no impression. Such are they who still repeat the childish argument: "Teachers work only five hours a day and nine or ten months in a year, and proportionately they are getting enough or too much." These people do not seem to realize that, even if this be the case, that teachers must live the remaining hours of the day and the remaining months of the year; they do not stop to think that when employed in teaching, teachers cannot be otherwise employed, and their ignorance blinds them to the fact that the teacher's work does not end with the school session, but oftentimes extends far into the night, when school papers are to be corrected and the next day's work is to be planned. Of course by *teachers* we mean they who *teach* school, not they who *keep* it; and if there are too many of the latter, let those responsible remember that in such cases they are getting

what they deserve : an inferior article for an inferior price. Moreover these people, and with them many others, otherwise well-meaning, do not seem to realize that teachers spend practically the whole of their lives in qualifying to teach the young and instil into them that which makes them citizens worthy of our beloved country, and that very often it is at a great personal and financial sacrifice that the necessary qualification is attained ; they do not seem to realize that teachers must teach by example as well as by precept, and to show the example of neatness, though not of extravagance, they must expend a little more on dress than the ordinary farmer ; that teachers are supposed to be the "leading lights" in the district, and consequently their purses (ah, "the poor empty things") must be open ever so wide when canvassers in patriotic or charitable causes call upon them.

But disregarding these unthinking, unappreciative people what shall we say of them who know and admit that teachers are underpaid—miserably so—and even oftentimes proclaim the fact and yet do nothing practical to relieve the situation ? Why this apparent indifference among fairminded ratepayers, legislators, editors, clergymen and others in this all-important matter ?—indifference, not as shown by their words but by their deeds ?

As to ratepayers perhaps their attitude is due more to a wrong conception as to their financial responsibilities with regard to education than to any deliberate indifference on their part. The term "Free Schools" is as yet not unknown among them, and may still take the words in their literal sense : they feel that we have a system of "Free Schools" in Prince Edward Island and therefore any attempt to make them pay the teachers' salaries is just so much imposition. They have been trained in the wrong way and now it will be no easy task to make them see that the words do not mean literally what they imply. But they must be disillusioned ; they must be taught to see that, whether they pay directly or whether the Government does the paying, they themselves are paying for the education of their children. We need however find no fault with

ratepayers for this attitude provided they do not make a political question out of it. If there is any one thing more than another to be deplored in this matter it is the making of a "political football" of so vital a question as the one which concerns the educational situation of today. If we have any regard whatever for education in this province we must eliminate politics entirely from all educational affairs. Let us therefore look at this point of the question in an impartial way: with our judgments unclouded by political bigotry and unbiassed by partizanship.

The following figures show what the government and ratepayers of the different provinces of Canada pay respectively for education. Figures prepared from last annual report of Chief Supt. of Education (acting):

Prov.	Gov't Expenditure	Per Pupil	District or Municipal Exp.	Per Pupil	Percent Pd. by Govt
Ont.	\$1,091,611	\$1.92	\$17,498,422	\$30.89	5.8
Que.	882,837	3.84	9,681,205	21.86	16.3
N.S.	412,975	3.70	1,207,179	10.35	25.4
N.B.	503,868	7.00	942,580	13.00	34.8
Man.	1,072,816	10.00	5,585,414	40.03	20.
Sask.	1,071,828	8.98	7,092,068	53.48	13.1
Alta.	569,555	5.60	5,552,059	44.21	6.7
B.C.	1,591,322	24.63	1,625,027	25.17	49.4
P. E. I.	173,962	9.47	70,610	3.67	71.1

A study of this table will show that Prince Edward Island pays for education, all told, less per pupil than any other province in Canada—that the government pays more per pupil than six of the other provinces, and of the total amount paid for education, it pays 71.1%, being 21.7% more than the next highest and 49.7% more than the average percentage borne by the governments of the other provinces. In other words, whereas the governments of the other provinces pay only 21.4% of the total amount spent on education, the remaining 78.6% being borne directly by the people, P. E. I. Government pays 71.1% of the total amount and only 28.9% is expended directly by our people. It will be noticed also that the total expenditure for education

in P. E. I. is \$173,962, practically one third of the entire revenue of the province.

Now these figures are not given with a view to apologising for the Government (let us emphasize this point for no one more than we deplore the mixing of politics in this question) but seeing these figures and realizing what they mean, we can see for ourselves the futility of our further urging upon the Government, under the present circumstances, the necessity of increasing teachers' salaries directly, especially when they have already told the teachers candidly that they cannot do it. Teachers must not blind themselves to the true state of affairs. The truth may sometimes be disagreeable, but if they are fair to themselves they must know it. The situation in a nutshell is this: The rate-payers say, "Let the Government increase the salaries;—the Government says candidly: "We are doing all we can."—What are teachers to do then?—Are they to accept the situation as it is—do nothing—and go on eking out a miserable existence on a pittance?—Are they to make the teaching profession a mere stepping-stone to something else?—Are they to continue serving an apprenticeship, as it were, in the schools of Prince Edward Island, only to go to the schools of Western Canada to the undoubted advantage of the latter? Are they, continuing thus, to fill our schools, continually with none but young inexperienced teachers and thus ruin our educational possibilities? Surely not. But what shall they do? Perhaps that question could not be answered better than by the following account of an interview the writer had with an editor not so very long since:

Some time ago I chanced to be talking to an editor, whose sympathy like that of all other editors, is with the poorly-paid teacher, when I remarked that teachers are practically the only salaried creatures at the present day who are not getting a living wage; whereupon the editor wheeled about suddenly in his chair, removed his glasses with a suddenness which almost alarmed me and cried: "See here! You teachers have no one to blame but yourselves; you are simply begging the profession and the sooner you get out of it the better."—I was about to interrupt, for I felt it was bad enough

to starve the teachers of this province without now heaping abuse upon them—"adding insult to injury"—but something in the determination with which the editor spoke, told me I had better hold my peace and so the editor continued: "How is it that you teachers get much less than my lowest clerk?—How is it that you do not even get enough to pay for your board and clothing in return for the years you spent in qualifying yourselves? How is it that somebody in the district boards the teacher for fifty cents a week less than is ordinarily charged "because teachers don't get much"?—How is it that teachers are looked upon by so many, as subjects for charity—How is all this I say? "Because"—and with this he brought his fist down upon the desk with a thud that made the inkstand bounce—because, you teachers are willing to teach for the miserable pittance they give you. I tell you you're beggaring the profession and if you continue teaching at that scandalous salary, you are simply doing an injustice to yourselves, to the teacher who is trying to secure a better salary and to the profession in general and you deserve no commiseration." Having finished he adjusted his glasses again; wheeled back on his chair and began perusing some clippings he had before him.

I sat mute for a while. Finally I ventured: "Mr. Editor, what would you advise the teachers to do?" At this the editor turned his eyes towards me and a kindly light lit up his features. I was reassured. "After all," thought I "it was his solicitude for the welfare of the teachers that caused his just indignation of a moment ago." He did not answer my question directly, however, but said, "Mr.——do you know what my press boy does when he believes it is time to get a raise? He comes to my office and says: 'Mr.——I've been working here now for six months and I would like to get a raise now, if you please.' I reply, 'Well, sonny, what do you think you are worth now?' 'Fifty cents a week more.' I give him the raise; I know he is worth it; I admire his manliness and forwardness and, furthermore, I know if he does not get what he asks he quits."

Is not the editor right—does he not tell teachers clearly what they must do? The solution to the whole question is in the hands of the teachers themselves. Of course, editors, clergymen and other influential fair-minded men can do much to help the cause and should. Giving them due credit for all that they have done for education in the past, they are to be most respectfully requested and urged to lend a helping hand at this critical time. But their efforts will be in a large measure, as heretofore futile, if the teachers themselves do not act and act at once in their own behalf. They must unite—demand a minimum wage and “stand out” till they get it. That may or may not involve a little hardship but even, if it does, it is better to bear a little sacrifice for a while, if necessary, than to go on teaching for the rest of one’s days at a sacrifice. And if all teachers “stand out” what then? Depend upon it the schools will not be closed for long. One of two things will necessarily happen. Districts that can afford it will meet your demands;—those which cannot, will either approach the legislators and place their case before them; when it will devolve upon the Government to, assist these districts, classing them, as other provinces do, “Poor Districts”; or these districts will apply for and secure the consolidation of their schools with some other or others—a consummation greatly to be desired. Or all districts will demand from our legislators that the situation be relieved and the government will be obliged to come to the rescue either by imposing a direct tax for educational purposes or otherwise.

Thinking teachers must surely know that “Union” is their last resort, and that it is by Union only that they can hope to put sufficient pressure upon the government or rate-payers to make either or both act. Never before were the prospects of securing fair salaries better. Teachers cannot afford to remain passive any longer. If they fail to grasp the opportunity before them now what can they hope for later?

He’s armed without that’s innocent within.—Pope.