

An address given by Dr. J. G. Althouse, Chief Director of Education for Ontario, at the Ottawa Convention.

I come to you fresh from the annual convention of the Canada and Newfoundland Education Association. There one had the opportunity of catching a glimpse of what is happening in education from coast to coast in this vast country. Indeed, the C.N.E.A. has issued a booklet, entitled "Trends in Education", which gives in detail the latest developments in each province and in Newfoundland. This booklet may be obtained from the secretary, Dr. C. E. Phillips, at the Ontario College of Education, for a nominal charge. It is well worth study.

The meetings of the association were memorable in many ways, but in no way more than in the revelation which they gave of the striking similarity of dominant elements of educational progress in every province. Every part of this Dominion is pre-eminently concerned about two phases of education,—about the necessity of equalizing opportunities and about the importance of the quality of the human product of the school system.

### Equal Opportunity

Equality of educational opportunity is an ideal hard to attain, but capable of much closer approximation than we now experience. It does not mean identity of opportunity, for not all children can profit equally from the same opportunities. It does mean the provision for each child of the best opportunity by which he can profit. An approximation of this provision depends upon at least three factors: a redistribution of educational funds to give to all children opportunities now enjoyed by only a few; the provision of adequate help to enable the child, or his parents, to select the course for which he is best fitted; and a conviction on the part of the public, including the child's parents, that continued education is advantageous.

These three conditions every province is seeking to bring about. In every province, as in Ontario, the inadequacy of the property tax as the main source of education budgets, the inequalities of assessments and the huge sums required for war purposes are complicating the financial problem. Despite these difficulties, however, every province is making progress towards a more equitable distribution of available funds and is increasing the amount of money available for education. No other province has such ambitious schemes as our own along these lines and all are watching with eager interest what Ontario is doing.

### Guidance to the Fore

In the field of guidance, too, this province is well in the forefront. Although a provincial director of guidance was appointed only a few months ago, he finds many of the larger communities already well organized for this service and a very general tendency to take advantage of the recent amendment to the High Schools Act which enables a High School Board or Board of Education to appoint a guidance officer. There are many communities, of course, in which no special officer is required, but yet there is urgent need of the information and of the personal service which the guidance department of a larger centre might offer. In these places the provincial guidance director can be of the greatest assistance in suggesting how to undertake and conduct the work and in protecting the board and the teachers from the mistakes of over-enthusiasm to which beginners are often prone. But communities which want the help of the provincial guidance director will have to ask for it; he is too busy to go about volunteering assistance, but he is certainly not too busy to give prompt attention to the serious enquiries of serious people.

## SIGNS AND PORTENTS

### Rural High Schools

It is only fair to give one warning. If any locality is pretty well convinced that the only high school course worthy of serious consideration is the general or academic course, that locality had better not seek the services of the provincial director of guidance, for even the faintest attempt at a guidance programme causes many serious-minded pupils and parents to raise quite vigorously the question of the adequacy of the academic course to meet the needs of a very large number of the boys and girls. It may interest you to know that this year the Department of Education is paying large grants to the boards of small rural high schools if they will engage to do two things: to make their schools available as community centres, and to devise variations of the general course to meet more adequately the needs of the local community and of the children in it. Not every board is able to devise such a variation from the general course, but it is surely significant that thirty have already shown enough ingenuity and enterprise to warrant encouragement.

### Public Interest

The third condition for the equalization of educational opportunity which I mentioned was that the public, including the parents, must be convinced that continued education is advantageous. This, it seems to me, places the responsibility of proof squarely upon the schools. I can remember that, in the days of the deepest depression, the secondary schools were crowded with older boys and girls who could not get work. In too many cases, the work offered by the school failed miserably to interest or to motivate these young people. What they learned in their enforced prolongation of school days was polite indifference, the habit of inattention and sustained idleness. It is quite likely that in the period of post-war reconstruction, in order to give demobilized persons and war workers a chance to become absorbed in civilian industry, the schools will be asked to care for older adolescents for two or three years beyond the present school leaving ages. The schools must manage to do a better job this time, or it will be futile ever to expect to convince the people of Ontario that protracted education is worth while.

### Reward for Industry

But if the keeping of reluctant pupils in a school which fails to enlist their efforts kills confidence in education, it is fortunately equally true that enabling eager young people to attend a school which serves them well has the opposite effect. It builds confidence in the benefits of education. And this province has been active in extending to many industrious and capable young persons the chance of continuing at school or at university after their own resources have proved inadequate to permit them to do so. Last year \$60,000 were devoted to this purpose; this year \$160,000 have been provided for Provincial Scholarships and for Dominion-Provincial Bursaries. It is perhaps not generally understood that this assistance is also available for the use of intending Normal School students who could not without this help manage to finance the required period of training. This help, it should be noted, is not for all who have the desire to use it; it is for those who have marked ability and industry.

### The Human Product

We must turn now to the other major concern of all the provincial school systems,—the quality of the human product of the schools. It is trite to remind you that the school pupils of to-day must be the citizens of to-morrow,—the citizens not only of this municipality, of this province and of this country, but the citizens of a world which, we trust, will be a far better world than the one for which we must bear our share of responsibility.

Because this is not only trite, but also true, it is fitting that we should ask ourselves what characteristics we think must be exhibited by the citizens of a brighter, better world,—a brave, new world. As I listened to the papers and discussions at the conference last week, there appeared to be general agreement that the citizens of that brave, new world must have at least three main characteristics. They must be able and willing to discern common purposes. They must have acquired the habit of working together to accomplish their aims. They must possess a scale of values on which some few goods rank so high that to attain them, they must be willing to sacrifice literally everything else.

### A Common Purpose

What is meant by the remark that children must learn to discern common purposes? For a very vivid illustration recall the events in Europe in the spring and early summer of 1940. The so-called "phony war" had ended abruptly with the German sweep through Belgium and around the Maginot Line. France collapsed like a pack of cards; the Lowlands fell without having had a chance; Britain repatriated the remnants of an army from Dunkerque and all the military experts believed that effective opposition to the Nazi power was over. As far as the mainland of Western Europe was concerned, that was practically true. France, the traditional champion of democracy, had proved ineffective. But remember that France had been split up into sections and partisan groups, that there had grown up a cynical disbelief in even the possibility of a common purpose strong enough to unite those warring groups. So France could not cope with the sudden emergency. Then Winston Churchill spoke to and for his countrymen. Despite the loss at a blow of all his effective allies, except the other units of the British Empire, and despite a complete lack of all military equipment which is only now beginning to be understood, this doughty John Bull defied the aggressor and won for decency, for freedom and for civilization a second chance. How was he able to do this? Because his countrymen recognized a compelling common purpose and were willing to subordinate to it every private and party advantage. And so Britain stood,—and stood to rally a world against evil.

This almost miraculous resistance is a tribute to Churchill, but it is also a tribute to the British people and to their training, for nations do not develop the ability to discern common purposes over night. It is inculcated by generations of a way of life, and each generation learns it in its most plastic years. It is in school days that future citizens can best be taught to look for common purposes as the best way of avoiding or surmounting difficulties. And no spirit is more conducive to common purposes than is a warm and generous school spirit.

### Concerted Action

But it is not enough to see what should be done; we must also do it. And, in these days of rapid communication, breath-taking scientific development and the everyday use of complicated machinery, more and more of the important things require concerted action. Now this is a new

and not a very congenial lesson for most of us to learn. The pioneer days are not so far behind us,—the days in which each family, if not each man, had to be almost self-sufficient,—the days in which a good man asked no odds from anyone,—nor any help, either,—but carved out of his fortune with his own wits and his own brawn. That is a heritage to be proud of,—it has left us much to cherish; but its self-sufficiency is not to-day as valid as it was, we must learn to work together or we must be content to fall behind those who do learn that lesson.

Now, working together is a habit, and like all good habits it can be encouraged and strengthened. Schools are setting themselves to teach this lesson. It is not easy, chiefly because it is a new lesson both to teachers and to pupils, and, when both teachers and pupils have a fair start at learning it, parents are often unconvinced or unsympathetic. When, in your schools, you find that the competitive elements are reduced and that joint tasks seem to have replaced many of the tough old individual assignments that you remember, will you take time to enquire whether this is by design or not? Will you hesitate to label it the softness of an effete age before you have ascertained whether it be not something more significant and more positive?

### Values Worth Sacrifice

Then the third characteristic which I mentioned of an effective citizen of the better world is the ability to find something important enough to warrant the sacrifice of all else. Freedom was a god of this sort to the British people when Churchill rallied in that black summer which I recalled to you. To him and to those who stood with him freedom was so important that to defend it they were prepared (and many of them expected) literally to sacrifice everything even freedom itself. It is only when men hold something dearer than life itself that they rise to the best that life can offer.

But sacrificial spirit is not quite enough. It is lamentably possible to devote a sacrificial spirit to evil ends. Simply to condition young people to the thought of self-sacrifice is only to go half the way, and half-truths are always dangerous. After all, the totalitarian nations did an effective job of stimulating the spirit of self-sacrifice in an ignoble cause. We must not make their mistake. We must teach our youths to select their causes rightly and not to be at the beck and call of unscrupulous demagogues. The Department of Education of this province makes no apology for attempting to habituate the children in our schools to see the Christian basis for ethical conduct. Nor does it offer apologies for those changes in the school courses which seek to assure to our children social development in terms of social obligation as well as of social rights and social success.

### School and Community

Here again school practice is of the utmost importance. When the school tradition is such that the pupils of the school play fair, work hard and pride themselves on being of service, only one thing can defeat that influence. That thing is the indifference or hostility of the community. When the school's code is contrary to the code of the community, the school loses out,—it seems to lack reality; it ceases to be convincing. But when the school's code is designedly high and when that code is reinforced by local public opinion, then you have a situation in which the pupil learns far more than the subject matter of the school course. He learns to live on the noblest plane envisioned by the elders of his community,—and that's a very noble plane indeed. In that situation, and only in that situation, the school really helps the youngster not only make a better living but to live better. And that is the kind of school that every province in this Dominion is trying to develop and to multiply. This banner province of the Dominion cannot take second place.