

MRS. GREENBERG IN LEAGUE RADIO TALK

(Continued from page 4)

hovels,—fire traps—unsanitary. Children educated in such elementary schools are naturally at a grave disadvantage when they enter the swiftly moving scholastic current of the modern township high school. Inevitably many withdraw, and the rest, for the most part, flounder along pathetically. No other state in the Union has such an unenviable record.

Inefficiency and Waste

To those familiar with the principles of economics it is apparent that the conduct of multiple units within a single system inevitably results in inefficiency and waste. Worse yet, a sense of defeat, through lack of actual accomplishment, is created in the pupils. Education is the basis of activity in adult life. Every child, therefore, in our complex civilization must be equipped with some skill,—an art, a science, a craft, if he is to be saved from the human scrap-heap—the degradation of the "bread-line." Ultimately deficient schooling is injurious both to individual and to the state.

The proposed bill for the larger school unit provides in substance "that within 90 days after the law goes into effect there shall be elected by popular vote a county board of education, consisting of five members, one each from five different districts within the county. Each county in the state is to be constituted a school district. Accordingly there would be 102 county school boards instead of the present 12,000.

Purpose of Board

The purpose of the school board is:

- (1) To levy a tax annually for the traveling expenses of the board, for equipment and supplies, for the salaries and traveling expenses of assistants of the county superintendent of schools.
- (2) To employ an adequate number of assistants such as clerks, helping teachers, nurses and attendance officers. The duty of the helping teachers shall be to visit schools not otherwise supervised and give the teachers help.
- (3) The board of education is to make a survey of common school districts and prepare a map indicating how these districts may be united into larger school districts, the school to be located at a natural community center.
- (4) The board shall call an election on the question of consolidating if 20 per cent of the legal voters of the proposed larger district shall petition.

The larger school unit would automatically reduce the operating expenses, and release the surplus funds for essentially educational purposes. The administration, the teaching staff, and the physical equipment would necessarily be more efficient, and eventually more economical, from the standpoint of conserving the children's time and interest and the taxpayers money. The advantages accruing to the community through the functioning of the larger school unit may be enumerated under eight headings.

- 1. The administration would func-

tion more effectively within and without the school, by giving more adequate supervision over methods of instruction, and by checking up the results; by enriching the curriculum through the introduction of music, the arts, vocational guidance and physical education; and, by developing the human and natural resources peculiar to the community.

2. The teachers would be better trained men and women, more alert mentally and imbued with a profounder understanding of the prime needs of the pupils and their parents. Some of the advantages of urban education would be disseminated in these rural communities. Infinite care, however, would be exercised not to over-emphasize urbanization.

3. The physical outlay; that is, the buildings, and the equipment incidental to the conduct of specialty courses and the instructors to direct them, could be realized through the utilization of the released monies.

4. These buildings could serve as communal centers.

5. Transportation would be provided for children living beyond a 2-mile radius of the communal schools. Formerly this presented a grave problem for in rainy seasons the dirt roads were well-nigh impassable. This obstacle no longer exists for Illinois' network of concrete highways is unrivalled, thus facilitating consolidation.

6. Lunches, wholesome and satisfying could be served at a nominal cost.

7. Equal educational opportunity will materialize more readily through the functioning of the larger school unit, for, within it there will be included the wealthier communities, usually having fewer children, as well as the poorer districts, having, as a rule, more school children.

Better Progress

Studies conducted by educators in various states proved conclusively that pupils in graded schools made more noticeable progress than those in one-room schools, and, further that the cost of education per pupil was less in the graded school than in the one-room school. It is not necessary to travel far afield in search of proof. Within our own state there are a few eminently successful consolidated schools: for example, in McHenry county ten school districts united to form one large, splendidly equipped modern public school.

It is patent to all intelligent observers that our country schools are not operating efficiently, and since our population is primarily agricultural, it behooves us to bestir ourselves in behalf of their urgent need. Unless we elevate the standard of

education of these less favored ones our own must inevitably descend by imperceptible degrees to the level of the weightier group numerically. "Illinois once had a very good consolidation law: but it was amended so as to make consolidation almost impossible." Let us revive that original worthy impulse.

Indicate, then, your alert citizenship by promptly communicating with the senator and the three representatives in your senatorial district, either in person or through the mail, and adjure them to consider favorably the proposed bill on the "Larger School Unit," and to vote for its passage when it is presented to the legislature for final action.

The constitution of the state of Illinois says, "The General Assembly shall provide a thorough and efficient system of free schools whereby all the children of the state may receive a good common school education." Let us guard this noble promise, lest it become an ignoble boast.

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