

# The Liberal.

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[Single copies, 3 cts.]

Vol. XLI.

RICHMOND HILL, ONT., THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 1919

No. 42

## Consolidated Schools

The Editor of The Liberal,

Dear Mr. McMahon:—I hope in this communication to close up for the present the discussion of Consolidation of Schools the opportunity for which I am much indebted through your courtesy in giving valuable space in your paper. I may repeat some statements already advanced in my concluding remarks. The arguments advanced have been gathered from various sources which may be considered common property.

Fifty years ago there was no country school problem. The town and rural school were much alike. Each had small cheap buildings, poor equipment and practically no teaching apparatus. Teachers were poorly paid. Well-trained teachers, skilled supervision, teaching equipment, special instruction an enriched curriculum, these and other things with which we are now familiar were practically unknown in city and country. But fifty years have seen great changes in education and in these changes the country schools in many cases have been left far behind. In city, town and village education has been more liberally provided for. The most experienced teachers have been drawn to them. To the studies have been added manual training, domestic science, Art, Music, Nature Study and other things have been done that make the City and town schools attractive to parents who are solicitous for the education of their children. As a result a better social spirit pervades the school. This is of importance in the education of children.

The country schools of course have improved very much and yet in most sections, under existing conditions, I doubt if they can be made much better. Buildings, playgrounds and accommodations are on the whole poor compared with the improved farm dwellings and other advancement. The Regulations of the Department of Education provide all the machinery and advanced thought necessary to give the best results, and yet the country schools poor, often miserably poor, compared with a good town or other graded school. This is not due to the lack of good teachers and progressive school Boards in the rural sections for in the great majority of cases the teachers are efficient and the trustees are anxious to improve and do improve school facilities and accommodations although the rate-payers are often slow to see the necessity for any changes. The defect is chiefly due to the numerous classes, the heavy programme, inadequate accommodation, but above all to the isolation of the country school and lack of that stimulus that comes only from numbers. The attendance is often small, the children come from the same locality and have the same interest and a majority are from related families. They bring very little of new interest to the school. There is little impulse to activity and the school suffers from this lack of new ideas and impulse to action. Under present conditions the country school realizes a smaller percentage of its possible efficiency than it should.

In regions where the school population is an average one the remedy for this condition of affairs lies in the concentration of several of these small inefficient rural schools into a union consolidated school of two, three, four or more rooms, in the provision of a good corps of teachers; and then in the transportation of the children from their homes in the morning and back to their homes in the evening, paying the expenses of such transportation out of the school funds. The plan in brief is as follows:—Two, three, four or more sections, each maintaining perhaps a one roomed school, vote to unite their schools to form a consolidated school with the permission of the Minister of Education. A school house of three or more rooms built on modern lines, and well heated, lighted and ventilated is erected on a large site at a central location. Arrangements are made for the daily transportation of all pupils living at a distance. The new element which makes this co-operation possible is transportation—the carrying of the child to the school. This is only an old idea in a new form. Since ever we had a school system it has been maintained that it was the duty of the state to provide each child with an opportunity to get on education. In carrying out this idea we have carried the school to the child. The new plan merely proposes to reverse the process, and to carry the child to the school—even more, to carry the child some distance to a much better school than he now has nearer home.

Such a plan naturally possesses certain advantages and also real or imaginary disadvantages. These may be stated as follows, enumerating first the advantages, then the disadvantages.

Such concentration means better schools. May be fewer teachers, but better will be demanded and retained. The consolidated school with its grad-

ed rooms will be such as to offer inducements to good teachers. Owing to the larger numbers of pupils in each grade, there will be present in the recitation work that stimulus that comes only from numbers. Owing to the larger number of pupils in the school as a whole and the new interests this larger number will bring, there will be a social spirit present on the play ground and in the school which will contribute greatly to the value of the education given.

Among the teachers there will develop a better professional enthusiasm than is known in the isolated school.

The second advantage is the partial equalization of opportunities and advantages as between the boy in the city and the boy in the country, by bringing a school equal to a well organized city or town school, with its many advantages, within the reach of the boy on the farm.

Another advantage is that such a combination, although costing more at the outset, will be more economical in the maintenance of good school facilities.

Another marked advantage is in the greatly increased interest taken in the school by the people of the consolidated district after the school has once been established. The larger and better school develops a broader and a better educational spirit. More interest taken in the larger school, better men and women will be selected for trustees, better teachers employed, school attendance improved, the teachers equipment increased and the attitude of the community towards the school changed. The school becomes a matter of pride instead of a matter of indifference, as it often is to the community. The testimony on this point is universal.

In localities where the plan has not been tried it is often stoutly opposed, while in localities where the plan has been given a fair trial the people are strong in its favour and its support. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio, Indiana and portions of the Canadian West where it has been well tried, the most vigorous opponents of the plan at the time of its introduction were later among its strongest supporters.

The objections usually advanced are along this line: It is impracticable. Experience disproves this.

Some parents object to sending their children so far from home, but so long as the child is well cared for the difference between one mile and five is negligible. Five miles with transportation is really nearer than one mile of walking. The ride is objected to by some, but it is better to take the child from his door and deliver him at the school house in the morning, safe, warm and dry and return him to his home in the evening, than that he should walk a mile or even half a mile and miss school often whenever the weather is bad.

A common argument against the plan is that the removal of the little local school house causes a depreciation in farm property in the immediate neighborhood with a corresponding increase at the concentrating centre. This applies at once to local jealousy and the pocket-book, and is an idea hard to eradicate. Experience elsewhere, however, is all on the other side. A school house on a farm does not necessarily make farm land valuable. What is wanted is that the opportunity of attending a good school be within easy reach of the children, and a good school six miles away with transportation will add more to the value of farm property than a poor or average school brought to within half a mile.

Novelty of the idea is to many an objection. Most communities move and think slowly, and many are content with things as they are and oppose efforts looking towards change and improvements. It was very difficult to introduce the first centralized schools in Ohio and Indiana. The movement began slowly and in Ohio, under carefully devised restrictions imposed by the Legislature. New centralization is in process throughout the entire region, and the restrictions have been removed.

There are other important considerations which would perhaps occupy too much space. I trust some interest has been awakened in this important question. Anyone wishing to see a copy of the Consolidated Schools Act, as passed at this session of the Legislature, may obtain one by addressing the Department of Education, Toronto.

A. J. CAMPBELL,  
P.S.I. West York,  
Written, April 12, 1919.

## NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR DIVORCE.

Notice is hereby given that Herbert John Lawrence, of the City of Toronto, in the County of York, in the Province of Ontario, Smoke Inspector, will apply to the Parliament of Canada at the next session thereof for a Bill of Divorce from his wife Jessie Lawrence, formerly of the said City of Toronto, now of the City of Buffalo, State of New York, one of the United States of America, on the grounds of adultery and desertion.

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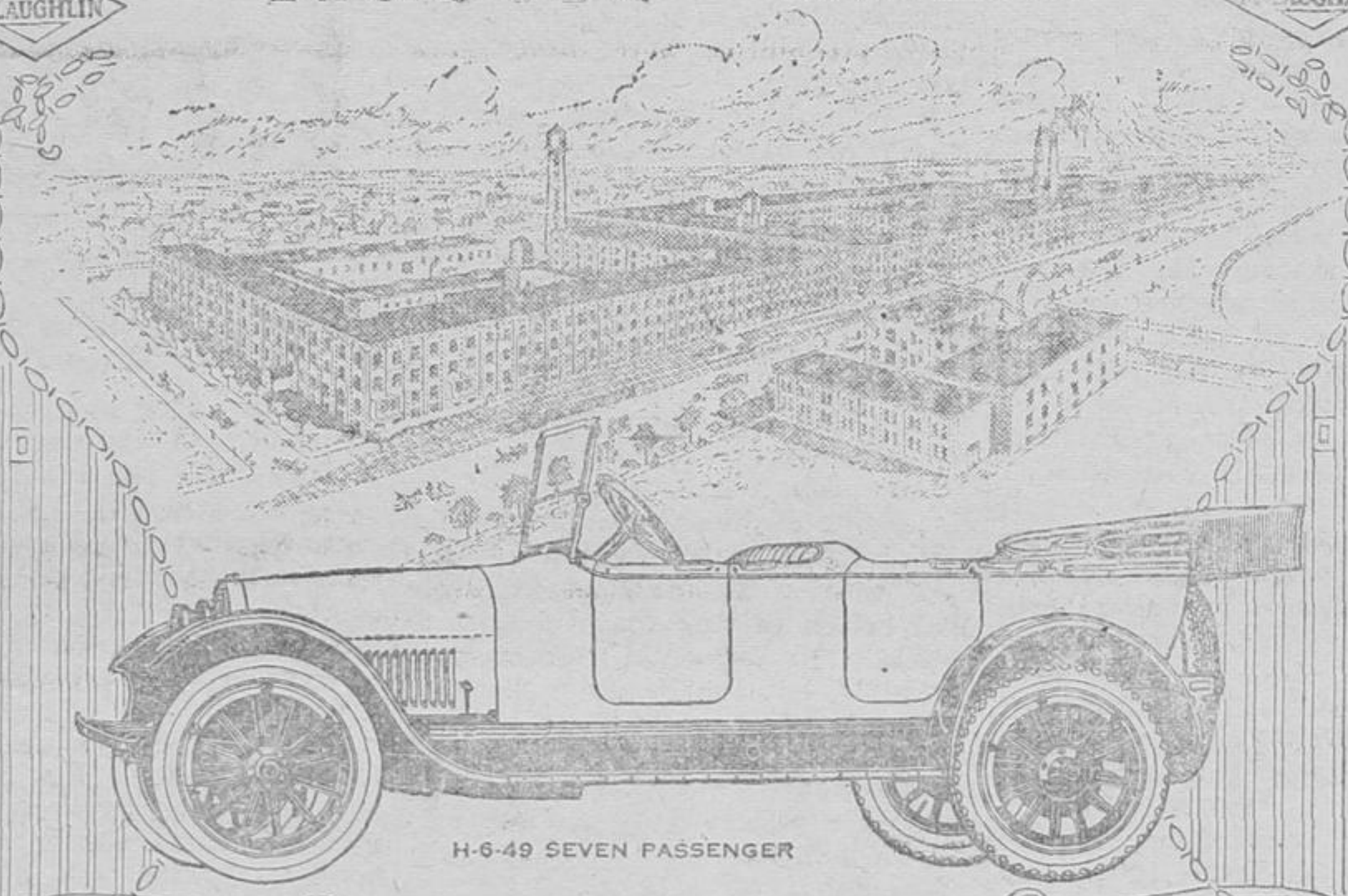
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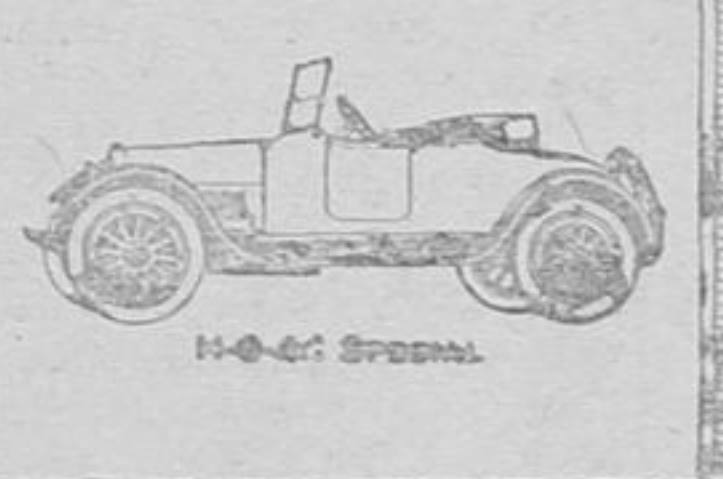
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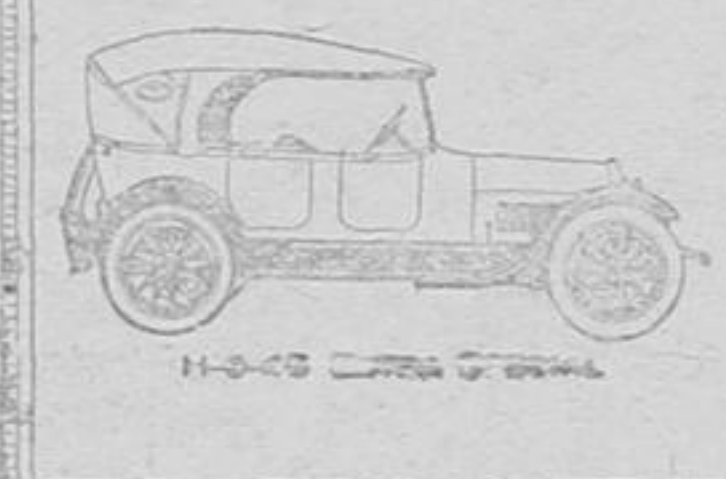
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