

# The Liberal

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J. E. SMITH, Editor and Publisher

MONA ROBERTSON, Associate Editor

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## - Speaking Personally -

### LOCAL BOARD TRIES READING EXPERIMENT

(By Jane Fort Manning)

Have you heard of the New Castle reading experiment? It concerns teaching in the primary grades with the aid of films. Its innovator, Mr. Glenn McCracken of New Castle, Pennsylvania, claims it is a superior method of teaching a child to read, especially the child who experiences difficulty.

Richmond Hill Public School Board approved two years ago of trying the experiment in one of its first grade classes. This year there are two first grades using it, and one second grade, the latter in the second year of the experiment.

And Richmond Hill board has the distinction of having many eyes focused upon the local experimental classes as there are only a few schools in the Toronto area trying the new method. Though schools in Peterborough, Whitby, and Niagara Falls, to name a few, have such classes, visits A Class

Just before Christmas I was permitted to visit one of these classes along with Miss Mabel Brown Assistant in Charge of Primary Education to the Superintendent of Schools in Regina, Sask., and Mr. Barthol and Mr. Mealy of Clark, Irwin, Ltd., publishers of the basic texts, the Laidlaw Series, used in the reading course. Principal Duard Rose, who in 1957 after a visit to New Castle recommended to the local board that they inaugurate the system, and Principal Newman of McKillop Public School escorted us into Miss Foster's first grade room at McKillop School.

Twenty-three little first graders were present, seven being home with the whooping cough. One young brown haired miss had been appointed to change the film strips in the projector.

The film and projector were all the additional classroom equipment needed except for the dark curtains across the windows. The projector costs \$100.00, the film strips \$25.00, and the curtains around \$175.00. Thus the outfit, for permanent, reusable equipment, comes to \$300.00.

A strip is flashed onto a screen which can be rolled up in order that the film can also be seen on a chalkboard for underlining, the colored image, fifty inches wide by forty inches high, in this instance was of a dog finding a kitten in a trunk. Before having the children read the sentences under the picture the teacher asked them questions concerning it, thus drawing them into a group discussion. Then the children were asked to find the "doing word," the verb, the "being word," the subject. Later the sound of the words was emphasized. Individual children were permitted to go to the board to point out particular words, or phrases.

I was struck by the diversity of work that could be incorporated in such an oral reading lesson by the use of film — sounds, spelling, sentence construction as well as reading by sight. There

was a feeling of sociability, but under control, engendered by the lesson and everyone familiar with children in the primary grades knows how gregarious they are and how they like to vie with each other.

**Longer Attention Span**  
The outstanding feature was the long attention span of the children during the lesson. All appeared interested in the lesson and were anxious to give the answers correct. Some educators believe this is the important point in the New Castle method. Primary children are known for the brevity of their ability to remain interested in listening to other children reading aloud from a book, or in reading alone themselves.

The conventional method of teaching primary reading can count on an attention span of only 10 to 15 minutes. The children I saw were attentive for thirty full minutes during our visit and their enthusiasm hadn't really abated when the lesson ceased and other work began.

The New Castle film does not consist just of the film strip course in the primary grades but covers the entire reading with the films. Some special instruction is also necessary for the teacher.

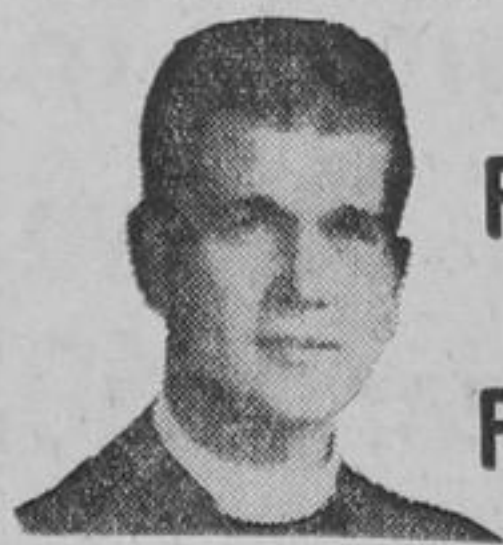
**Only An Experiment**  
Local educators have emphasized that the plan is only an experiment and the time for its final evaluation is not yet ripe. Members of the board and Superintendent Gordon McIntyre, as well as the principals and teachers involved, are keeping a close touch on the findings of the provincial Department of Education as a study is made of the method both here and in the United States.

Some experts believe the answer to teaching reading practices depends still as in the past, on the teacher. And there is no gadget to compare with a dedicated, competent, primary teacher. But it must be admitted modern gadgets are certainly improvements and certainly the New Castle method could be helpful in primary work if only to provide a large, clear page for all the children to see at once and learn together the many facts involved in learning to read correctly. Some of these facts could be neglected for the sheer want of time as the teacher hears each child read individually.

**Films Here To Stay**  
In this day when films play such a large part in children's lives, it seems something like the New Castle film experiment is here to stay. Film strips of course are already modern teaching aids but are usually an adjunct, not the nucleus around which a whole reading program is built.

Richmond Hill Public School Board is to be congratulated for "trying something new." There must be progress even if in the long run their trail is abandoned for a better one, be it old or new.

North America, as indicated by the fact that Robeson is now settled in Britain. And a few years ago we were engaged in the cold war which has since thawed considerably. Referring to this matter to Mr. Delmer, he says "Robeson is only one of thousands of people who cross the screens during the 90 minutes presentation of this film. We met him in the Crimea and witnessed a concert which he gave to 1500 soviet children. It was great art, it looked as if he were singing to them and he recorded it and it would be foolish to eliminate this look at Soviet youth because of prejudices against the man Robeson. The prejudice is I believe stronger in the U.S.A. but still four thousand Americans went to see the film in the first six days of its appearance. Our correspondent is absolutely right when he says that "a travel movie showing the Bolshoi Ballet, the collective farms and other features of Soviet life is worthwhile" — this is just what "Caravan in Russia" is. Except for Mr. Delmer we on this newspaper have not yet seen the film. — Editor.



by Rev. Calvin H. Chambers  
SINCERITY

The words, "blessed are the pure in heart", have been almost exclusively identified with sex and morality, in our day and age. But this is to limit the full meaning of these great words of our Lord. Purity of heart has to do with sincerity of purpose and single mindedness. The opposite of purity of heart is double-mindedness and instability.

There is a great deal of faulty thinking about sincerity. Many people claim that this is all we need, and that if we possess this spirit everything will go well with us. But this is sheer unthinking sentimentality. Does it make any difference what a person believes? Most emphatically! A person who builds with straw may be sincere, but his house will not stand the cold of winter. A person may be sincere in what he believes, and yet have a philosophy of life which is contrary to the revealed will of God. It is possible to be sincere, but to be sincerely wrong.

Our sincerity must be based upon our response to what God has done for us in Christ. If a man or woman professes to be a Christian, it means that he has accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. He is now committed to the interests of God's Kingdom, and sees all of life as a challenge to live to the glory of God. If he is sincere in his profession, he will not be ashamed to take his stand boldly for those things which advance the work of Christ's church, and uphold principles which are in keeping with the spirit of the New Testament. Christian sincerity has to do with our response to God's call to believe and obey. Those who are sincere in the surrender of themselves to God are "pure in heart". God honours such sincerity with a knowledge of Himself in this life, and the promise of complete knowledge in the life to come. This is what the words, "for they shall see God", means. What is the vision of God, which so many of the saints of the church claim to have had? Is it some mystical experience which only those who have the time to cultivate the "spiritual life" may hope to have? What does it mean to "see God" especially when the Bible reminds us that "no man hath seen God at any time". The ability to see God is an amazing gift. But it differs in every person. One man may look at a painting and see very little to interest him. Another may be thrilled at what he sees. The artistic background and training of each man has a great deal to do with how they see the painting.

This is also true of "seeing God". When we are sincere in our commitment to God and His will, He permits Himself to be seen and known throughout the length and breadth of His creation. Thus the psalmist could say, "The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth forth His handiwork." The world had His invisible God made Himself known to the psalmist heart. Think how often Jesus pointed to the beautiful things of nature in order to teach lessons about God and His Kingdom. He saw God in everything.

Above all our Lord pointed to Himself as the supreme revelation of the Father. He said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." To those who seek to know the meaning of Jesus Christ, with sincerity of purpose, God grants the knowledge of Himself in the most personal and satisfying way. In Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, but only by faith which yields to God can His glory be seen "in the face of Jesus Christ".

Yours truly  
Henry C. Hall

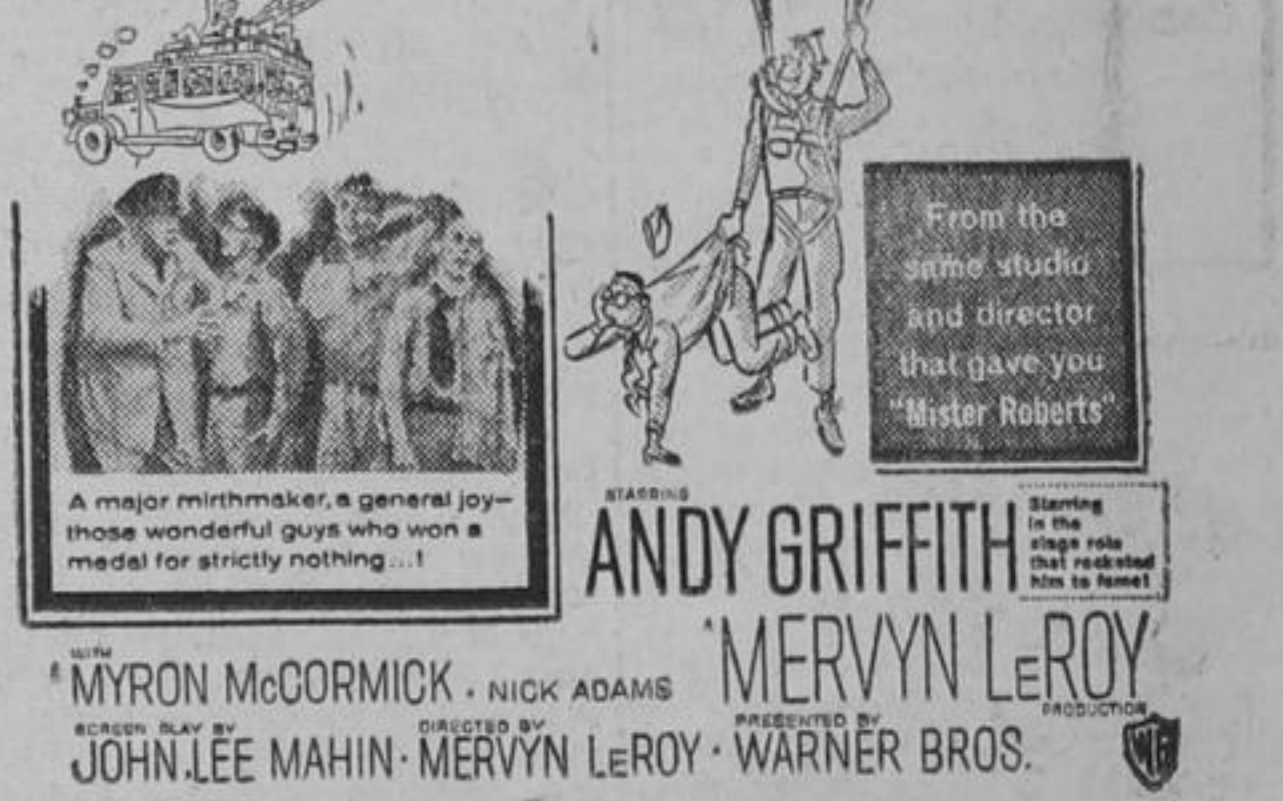
NOTE: The motion film, "Caravan in Russia" is an independent production. That the producer is a member of our staff is merely incidental. The advertising of the film is the producer's business. There was no expression of adulation for Paul Robeson in our news report. If our correspondent will re-read the report he will agree there was no expression of any kind by this newspaper. The report reproduced the press releases in describing a concert given by Robeson to Soviet children. The producer of the film in any case came some months ago from Britain where the same feelings concerning Robeson have never been aroused as they have in

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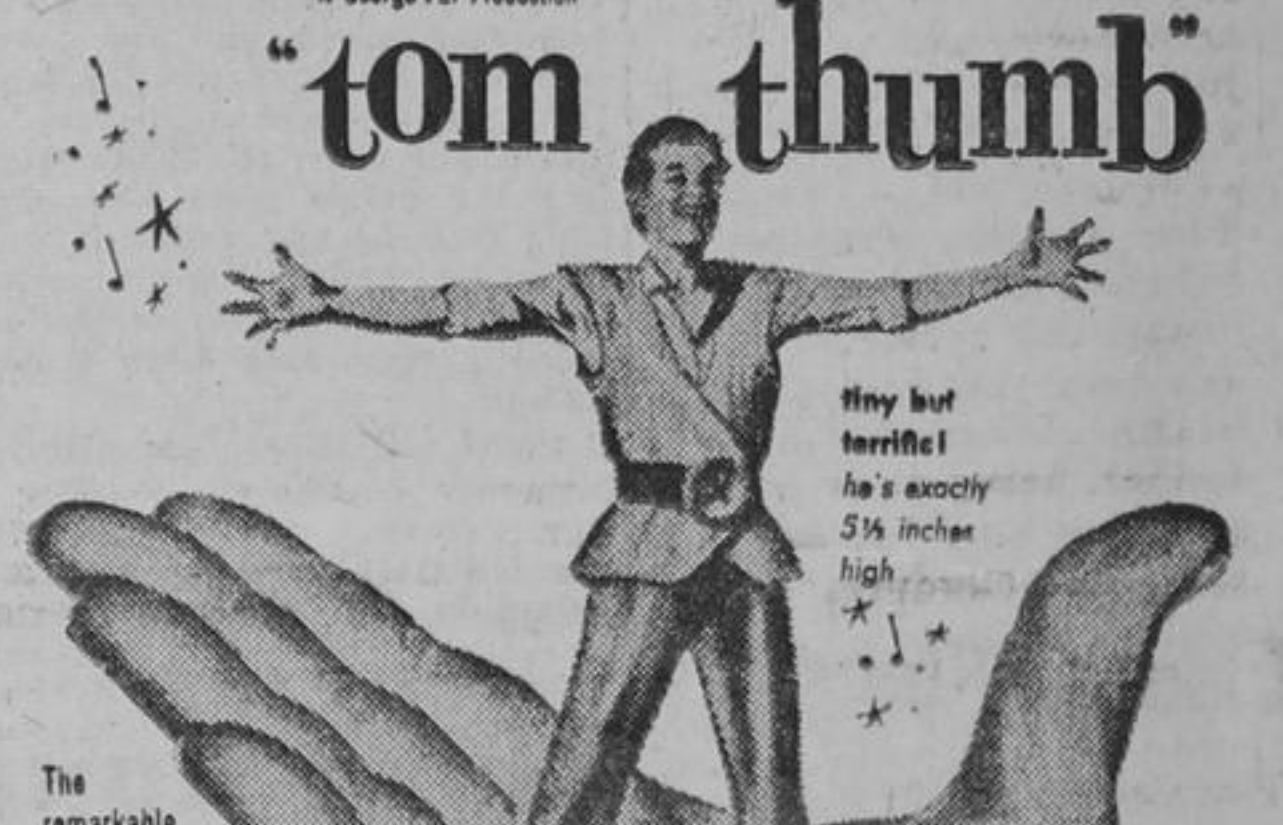
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## Religious Instruction In Schools

Consecrated Christian parents will agree that their most important earthly responsibility is the proper education of their children. They realize that the youth must be trained in bible principles if they are to be co-laborers together with God, reflect honor to their home, and render service to their fellow men. The constant prayer of such parents is, "Lord, save our children."

The world today is faced with the problem of delinquency. There are not only delinquent juveniles of course; there are also delinquent homes.

In the final analysis, the correction of this delinquency, the answer to the problem and our success in the Christian life depends on the regularity of our daily spiritual habits.

Against this background it is difficult to argue against religious instruction in the schools. In our correspondence columns last week a reader wrote that, "Religious instruction (in the schools) can be taught without stirring up the old prejudices that date back to the Spanish Armada. . . no child will suffer from the teaching of the scriptures, no matter how poorly it may be done. No child will be enticed from the religious practices of his family by a weekly lesson in the scriptures." The majority of parents will go along with our correspondent so far. Unfortunately there is a problem.

In spite of what our correspondent writes, it cannot be denied that there is a growing concern at the current trend to introduce religious instruction in the schools. The old old prejudices are in fact revived just as swiftly in our modern society whenever religion becomes an issue, as in the days of the Armada. The proof of this is to be found in the correspondence files of the Honourable W. J. Dunlap, former Minister of Education, Province of Ontario. For some years now religious instruction has been presented in the elementary level in the public schools of Ontario. Of more recent date, this has been extended to the high schools as a result of certain departmental regulations which were amended in 1957. Several high schools have taken advantage of these relaxed regulations to institute some form of religious training for high school students.

As soon as the amendments were made known the Minister was swamped with correspondence and petitions and briefs, many of them strongly in opposition to the extension of religious training in public schools. However, religion is now a part of the regular school programme. Parents who object to this in principle for whatever reason have only one recourse, and that is to ask the principal that their children be exempted. But to do so could lead to harm and unnecessary discrimination against those children who voluntarily absent themselves from these religious exercises.

It is the most difficult of problems. We cannot help but recognize that the motivation supporting religious instruction in the tax-supported schools of the Province is well-meaning and laudatory. We also feel sympathetic to the correspondent who says that "no child will suffer from the teaching of the scriptures." In fact we feel strongly that religious instruction must always be a very good thing.

Against this petitioners who have sent briefs to the Minister of Education have stated that, "In our view the most grave implication is that now the state is embroiled in the contentious arena of religious education. The public schools and high schools of the Province are supported by the taxes of people (Roman Catholic Separate Schools excepted) with a wide variety of religious convictions. Yet, in effect, a portion of their tax money is supporting the teaching of a particular "brand" of Christianity, which may or may not coincide with their own religious concepts. These petitioners declare the preservation of religious freedom requires that the state should not be identified with any particular religion or religions. Religious liberty, they claim, is a source of strength to the state. Where once the public school system, they say, was an important instrument in blending the various cultures and traditions of our people into the fabric of national unity, it now may well become a tragically divisive factor. The next step, they warn, compulsory attendance at religious instruction for all — is ominously closer to reality. And with that, they conclude, the public school system will be well on its way as a means to impose religious conformity upon the community. Is there any solution to this awkward problem? Can religious instruction in the schools be applied satisfactorily to assure the parents of Orthodox persuasion, minority Christian churches, Jewish or other religious views, that should their children attend these classes the training offered would not undermine their own distinctive or unique religious culture or tradition?"

We can all agree that the primary responsibility for the religious training of children rests on the parents and then the church. To place the responsibility otherwise tends to subvert the home and weaken the church. However we cannot be unmindful of the many considerations in connection with this problem with which we must reckon, and uppermost is the conviction that religious training is good for children, that many children get none at all in the home, and do not attend church, and for these in particular, some religious training in the school must be helpful. It would seem that the answer would be that where communities wish to have religion taught in the school, it could be better if the instruction could be given by the teacher on the basis of a carefully prepared course of study approved or prepared by the Department of Education which would bear in mind the diversity of religious traditions in Canada.

The only other alternative satisfactory to all groups would appear to be to keep religious instruction out of the regular, daily school programme and for the school to provide classroom space after school hours for clergymen in the community who wish to conduct classes in religious instruction, on an entirely voluntary basis. Either of these courses would appear to be a sensible answer to the problem and should enable the schools to give our children a right knowledge of the most determining force in creating the world in which they live, without stirring up those old prejudices dating back to the Armada and to which our correspondent referred.

## "Dear Mr. Editor"

Religious Education in Schools Dear Mister Editor: Religious Education has been almost eliminated as a part of our educational system. It is so restricted that it is hard to realize that Christianity is the basis of our whole system of elementary education.

America is the last bastion of Christianity in the world. We have the freedom of religion, but we have our Christianity just a veneer.

Why do we deny our youth the religious background which will strengthen them morally and spiritually and insure the future of a nation? The Jewish and Catholic Church provide two to three hundred hours a year of religious study, but our Protestant children are reached by church school alone.

With the ever increasing crime waves, juvenile delinquency, and anti-Semitic outrages of the past, we as Protestants could not afford to waste time bickering and stumbling over sectarianism.

Great numbers of boys and girls in every community do not attend Church school and are from homes where religion is not taught. Many of our teachers and parents are from such homes and feel inadequate I'm sure as teachers of religion.

I speak for a large number of parents who are concerned about the situation and would welcome the help of a clergyman in giving religious instruction in our schools.

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" is a command not only to the preacher but for every Christian parent.

I see visions of great blessings in our way of life if we humble ourselves and in humility do what we can to obey this great command.

Christianity has changed the destiny of nations so it is my challenge for the New Year to the Home and School Associations in York County to give your support to your School Board and the Ministerial Association in their effort to give religious instruction in our schools.

Elsie Kojola  
President, York Simcoe Home and School Council

with Mr. and Mrs. Paul Robeson in Yalta a seaside resort which steals the show." The advertisement on page two has Paul Robeson's name as the headline in large black type.

Your staff must have forgotten that a few years ago Robeson's concert tour across Canada was cancelled due to the indignation of patriotic organizations and the danger of disturbances if he had appeared.

A travel movie of Russia showing the Bolshoi Ballet, the collective farms and other features of Russian life is worthwhile to give us a glimpse of what progress the disciples of Lenin have accomplished, but Paul Robeson basking on the sands of Yalta should not be a part of it. He is an anachronism, a frustrated artist who exchanged his American birthright for a mess of communistic and atheistic potage, and who has lost the good name he once had among his own race in the U.S.A. and Canada.

The only type of movie he should be featured in is one entitled: "Traitors of Democracy," which would also include Lord Haw Haw, Tokio Rose, Alger Hiss and the rest of those psychopaths who stabbed us in the back. I could have understood public adulation to Robeson in a Spadina district ethnic group newspaper but for it to appear in Richmond Hill's only publication which has a circulation catering to Canadians of the highest patriotism has shocked me deeply. Somebody goosed and how!

Yours truly  
Henry C. Hall

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