

New School Explained by Timmins Principal

Mr. E. J. Transom Gives Impressive Address to the Kiwanians, Outlining the Differences Between the New School Course and the Former Methods of Study. New Course to Meet New Needs

In an address to the Kiwanis Club at their regular luncheon on Monday, Mr. E. J. Transom, supervising principal of Timmins public schools, dealt with new trends in education and with the new Ontario course of study. The address was a most illuminating one and the members of the Kiwanis Club felt that Mr. Transom had given a decided public service by his illuminating address.

Mr. Transom took as the title of his address, "New Ideas in Education." He pointed out that the changes in industrial, economic and social conditions which have taken place in recent years creates a demand for a kind of education different from that which was regarded as adequate in the past. "It would be difficult," Mr. Transom said "to find a period in the history of education which has been marked by such widespread interest and at the same time so much unrest and uncertainty as have characterized the last fifteen years. This world-wide feeling of dissatisfaction with education and its results have resulted in major changes in most national systems of education." It was apparent, Mr. Transom said, that the Ontario Dept. of Education had to make basic changes in the educational system of the province to meet the new conditions.

In 1926, Mr. Transom said, England made a number of revolutionary changes based on reports known as the Hadow reports. The present Ontario course is indebted to the Hadow reports for its underlying philosophy. The new course is concerned with individual differences to much greater degree than the old course. The aims of education and mental hygiene should be the same, Mr. Transom thought. The responsibility of the school is not limited to intellectual training, as was believed in the past, but the most important outcomes of education are the formation of the general habits and attitudes that make the individual better able to meet life's problem. One of the most common causes of maladjustment in school is the discrepancy that may exist between the ability of a pupil and what is demanded of him. Each child should be developed within the limits of his ability. The growing child must learn increasingly to face the realities of life.

"The old system," said Mr. Transom, "stressed the value of subject matter set out to be learned. The important thing in school life was the number of facts learned. It was a subject matter course. The new course does not undervalue the need of facts but stresses the way the facts are acquired. The way a child learns facts is as important as the material learned. . . . The old course stressed memorizing of facts; the new course the understanding of what the pupil learns. Elementary education should promote desirable attitudes, ideals and appreciations. . . . Of far greater importance than the amount a child knows is the way in which he knows what he knows. . . . The new system utilizes the experiences and interests of the child as the beginning from which new informations and understandings are developed. The start is made from the known, and new materials are tied into it. The material is within the capacity of the child. Moreover, children learn not because they are forced with threats of punishment, but because their interests have been stimulated."

Continuing in the development of his thesis, Mr. Transom pointed out that the old system taught subject matter and isolated units. The new course integrates the material of many subjects into larger units to make them meaningful. The new course treats of peoples and governments, ways of living, world relationship, geography in relation to history, rather than a memorization of capes, bays and cities. . . . The children are encouraged to take the initiative, to study the problems to make their own suggestions for the solution of their problems, to plan their work, to do their own studying and thinking, and to arrive at their own conclusions."

Touching on what is meant by learning, the speaker referred to the fact that teachers have for generations tested learning by asking children to work exercises, to repeat formulas and to reproduce material exactly similar to items used during the learning process. Children solve varying proportions of the exercises, and are picked accordingly. But learning has not been tested. True learning can only be tested by new situations, real life problems by the ability to use the learning in a practical way. . . . Mere knowledge should not be mistaken for education. Teachers who are alive to their responsibilities can no longer be satisfied if their classes having mastered the contents of the course can give it back in recitation and examination. They must become more and more concerned with the behaviour of pupils. The attitudes which the school develops are much more important than the facts learned. . . . A child cannot be understood apart from his past and present environment. A child brought up in a home where stealing and sneaking are part of the life, takes over that life and it becomes a part of him, so naturally

he acts that way. A boy brought up in a good home is likely to be influenced so that he naturally acts properly. . . . The work of the school is to make an adequate study of the delinquent or backward boy and his environment, then attempt to modify his behaviour. School enterprises should be centred in the development of the individual child. The child must be stimulated through his own nature."

The new courses, Mr. Transom noted, stress manual training, vocational subjects and music as essentials of a liberal education. . . . Health should be taught, not as subject matter to be memorized, but as a way of living. It is given a leading place in the course and should be an integral part of all studies and constantly kept before the children. . . . Work should be presented mostly in the form of problems to give the children an opportunity to think out solutions rather than notes to be memorized. . . . The new school encourages the child to be a distinct personality, to believe in his ability, to express himself freely, to act on thinking and to pass judgment only after the pertinent facts are evaluated.

Mr. Transom said that the new school places emphasis on projects as ideal ways of learning. In this learning the child sets the problem and works out a solution independently of the teacher's help.

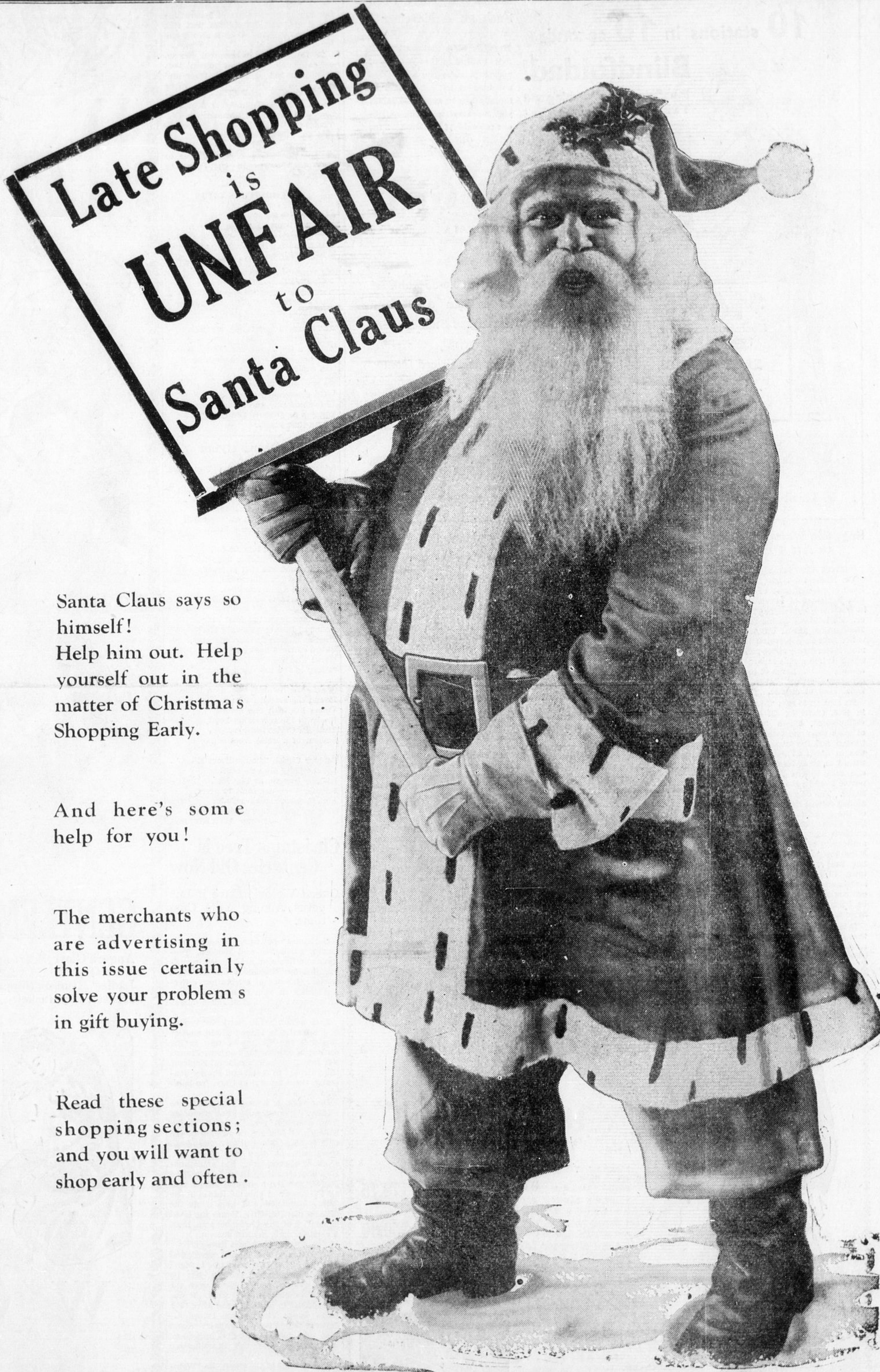
In science, Mr. Transom said, the new school is more concerned about interesting the children in the wonders of nature and giving them a desire to get more knowledge, rather than about a few facts to be memorized.

The teacher in English now is also more anxious to give the children a desire to read many supplementary books and thus acquire an interest in reading rather than having them read a few books selected by the teacher. Children's interests need not be the teacher's interests. The teacher should act as a guide in selecting material for the children. The importance of supplementary reading can scarcely be over-estimated. The old course was concerned chiefly with the children learning what was given them by the teacher—to follow absolutely the ideas that the teachers gave. The new course stresses creativity. The child is given an opportunity to create or think out things for himself.

Mr. Transom described what he considered the fundamental differences between the old course and the new. He said the old course was based on faulty psychology that stressed the development of certain areas of the mind, and from it developed a course of study with subject matter as of primary importance. The new course of study is based on the psychology in which the child is treated as a unity, and it is seen that any educative process changes not only a certain part of the mind, but the entire individual. During the day the child not only learns but at the same time certain attitudes are developed; also his emotional states are changed. He either is gaining or losing confidence during the day. He either likes school a little better or otherwise. He has either gained confidence to meet the situation of life or lost some. He can think more freely for himself or otherwise. The new course lays great emphasis on understanding the characteristics and background of each individual child, and to organize the work of the school so that each child gains most from his experience. This implies not only an understanding of a child's mental development, but an understanding of him as a total organic functioning individual. It calls for answers to such questions as these: What does he seek for himself in his activities in school? How does the teacher respond to him? How can a way be provided for growth in terms of his individual characteristics? "Understanding!" "Independent thinking!" "Critical judgment!" "Pupil enterprises!" "Problem solving and Purposeful Thinking!" These, said Mr. Transom are the new slogans of the Ontario system.

"Each child varies from other children with respect to a large number of physical, mental and emotional characteristics," continued Mr. Transom. "A child may rank high in one trait and relatively low in another. It is important to meet each pupil's individual needs as far as possible, not only that he may succeed in his school work, but that his entire personality may become well adjusted to useful living. Whoever would guide a child wisely must understand not only the nature of that child but the setting in which he lives. No programme of personality education can succeed unless it deals with the whole child. . . . It is much simpler to give notes to be memorized, than to make knowledge interesting—to teach facts so that they are related to life and within the child's area of experience. It means teaching on a higher plane. . . . If all children were born with equal ability, and report cards measured the degree of work and perseverance, I would be in favour of them. However children are not equally endowed with ability to do school work. The result is that an honour list is usually a list of those who have been

(Continued on Page Two)



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