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Consolidation of Schools

BY LOLA HEIKES.

Much has been said in regard to the consolidation of country schools, both for and against the system. By consolidation of country schools is meant the union of two or more schools, in order to establish a better school in an agricultural community, where the children may acquire an elementary and a high school education without leaving their homes. There are four kinds of consolidated schools: The complete or township type, having all the schools of the township; partial type, including only a part of the township; village or town type, located in a town or village, and the country type, having the school located in the open country. Of these four kinds, the last is the most desirable and the most numerous. Some schools furnish transportation, others do not, and some furnish it to a part of the district only. Where it is furnished, it is the duty of the school board to secure the services of a suitable driver, decide upon his salary and see that his team of horses is adequate and procure wagons suitable for carrying the children. Where transportation is not furnished, barns and shed are supplied to those who drive their own horses. If transportation can not be supplied to everyone, it is given where it is thought to be most needed, to small children or to those living farthest from the school. The success of the consolidated school is largely dependent upon the transportation, so the importance of getting the best wagons and equipment can not be too strongly urged. In some parts of Nebraska Ford automobiles arranged for jitney service, can be used. One car can cover two or three times the territory covered by a team and wagon, and the expense is much less. In every place where transportation has been tried, the results are all that can be desired.

Consolidation depends entirely on what the people think of it—whether they are in favor or not. Some people do things simply for the good that is in them. Others do them for the amount of money that can be gained by them. And still others do them in order to help some one else. Those people in favor of consolidation are in favor of it principally for the good to the community and to the children. Some reasons urged by those voting against consolidation are: The increased taxes, the transportation troubles, bad roads and the necessity of having to provide suitable clothing for the pupils to attend the central school. One farmer said that before, his son was contented with overalls and heavy shoes, but now he must have a better suit and fine shoes.

To some people, it makes no difference whether the schools are consolidated or not and these are the hardest to convince that consolidation is needed. This class includes renters, retiring farmers and those having no children of school age. Of course, these people are not always indifferent to consolidation, but they gener-

ally are. These people do not have the right community spirit because they are not willing to help in anything unless there is some personal gain for them.

Consolidation was introduced into New England over forty years ago, and they have conveyed the children to school since 1870. Other states further west have gradually and wisely followed the example of the New England states. This system is now being used in forty-six different states of the union. Indiana has six hundred consolidated schools and Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota are gradually acquiring more consolidated schools. Practically all of Massachusetts is now consolidated and even Florida and Louisiana are beginning to take notice.

One of the most important questions arising from a discussion of consolidation is, "Will it cost more or less than the old system." It will cost more than the old system, but please take notice of how much more you are getting out of it. Instead of three or four districts, each with a ramshackle, tumbled down schoolhouse without proper heating, lighting or ventilation, a school with probably an average of ten children and an incompetent teacher in charge, you have one large attractive building with the proper heating, lighting and the proper equipment for teaching children and young people and between two and four hundred children attending the consolidated school in which there are generally four or five teachers besides the principal and janitor. Also transportation is furnished in most schools and the pupils are not exposed to the cold and wind in winter or the rain in spring and fall. And, too, the course of study is greatly enlarged, being made to include domestic science, manual training and agriculture. Consolidation will cost more at first than later, because the building must be built and equipped for use and the desks, books and other furnishings will have to be bought. But when the districts unite, the land in the different districts is sold and more is bought in a single plat, for the site of the central school. Also the district school houses are either sold to people wanting them or they are moved to the central school, where, after being remodeled, they are used for homes for the principal, teachers and janitor.

Probably the most important question is "How will the money be obtained?" This can be done in several different ways, chiefly by increased taxation, appropriation from the state, by individual aid, such as gift money or land, and by the help of the pupils.

At a meeting of the school board the amount to be raised is decided and then at the next election the question, whether or not, they will raise that amount of money, is voted upon. If the result is in the affirmative, it is decided that consolidation will be affected in those districts concerned. If the result is in the negative it is not possible to have it. But in case it is the former, a levy on all the land and property in all the districts taken in, is made for a

higher number of mills on the dollar.

In Minnesota they are two classes of consolidated schools, class A, having four or more departments, and class B, having less than four departments. A "class A" consolidated school is entitled annually to five hundred dollars aid from the state, and a "class B," to two hundred and fifty dollars aid. Both classes are allowed two thousand dollars per year for transportation, making the total state aid for the first two thousand five hundred dollars and for the second two thousand two hundred and fifty dollars. But Nebraska allows only one hundred and fifty dollars state aid annually for a consolidated school, except for an agricultural high school, which is given twelve hundred and fifty dollars, provided that the people raise the same amount. Therefore it is necessary to raise more by taxation in this state than in most other states. The schools also aided by sum of money or gifts of land from individuals who are interested in the welfare of the community and the education of the children. Also, the pupils may help, as in a certain county in Maine. During the summer months the boys raised vegetables and berries, on the land owned by the school for agricultural experiments, and sold them. The money was used to equip the manual training room for the boys.

The second question of importance will probably be where to locate the central school, whether in a town or in the open country at some cross roads. Special cases would be in places situated as Dakota City is, at the county seat, having the convenience of a street car and the railroads. If located at the county seat, the school has the advantages of the services of the county agent and county superintendent, besides having the court and other county business held there. The county agent may be made useful in such matters as lectures and demonstrations in regard to agriculture, also his services are free and therefore his work would supplement the work of the special instructor in agriculture and connect it with the farm work of the county. The county superintendent would be useful in much the same way, and also in the matter of examinations, the pupils would not have to go to another town to take them. Since the court is held at the county seat the classes in civics may attend the trials and get some helpful idea of how court is conducted, and of legal procedure.

If the school is located at the crossroads it is more convenient for most people. If the school is to take in only the country districts, the open country is the best place to have it, because then the country people think they are getting more for their money and it seems that it is more their school than if it were located in town. Some people seem to think that a small town is the very worst place imaginable for young folks.

The question of transportation is a very important one. Where people used to walk, they now take an automobile, jitney or street car and why shouldn't the children share in this prosperity? In some consolidated districts no transportation is supplied but barns are provided and the children drive to school and they are paid a certain amount per day for their own transportation. The Sholes consolidated school in Wayne county is of this type and the people are well satisfied. In another class of schools barns are not provided, but the parents are allowed a certain amount per day, generally between four and seven cents, for getting their children to school. The Mascot consolidated school in Harlan county pay five cents a day per child, in place of transportation. The plan in most general use is the school wagon system at public expense. Under this system the district board arranges the routes, purchases the wagons and hire the drivers and their teams. The wagons supplied by the district are well built with glass windows and heated by furnaces which are fastened under the floors of the wagons. These wagons should be equipped with good brakes and should accommodate from ten to sixteen children. They are as comfortable and as well heated as any home.

The driver whose salary is between thirty-five and sixty dollars per month, must be a temperate man of good habits and fully capable of maintaining discipline in the wagon. He is usually a farmer and living near the end of the route. He furnishes his own team and gives a bond for the faithful performance of his duty. He must ride inside the wagon and keep the children in good order.

The route which each wagon must travel is generally about six miles long. All children living more than two miles from the school building must be transported. A child may be asked to walk three quarters of a mile to meet the wagon, but never more than that. Where before the children had to either drive to school

in an open buggy or walk that distance in the mud and water or snow-drifts, with bad associations en route, especially in the case of girls, they now ride in a covered wagon, without any danger of catching cold and with a driver to maintain control of them. Also there is no straggling along home at five, or five-thirty every night, but as soon as school is dismissed the pupils are loaded into the wagon and started for home. It takes only about three minutes to get started in good weather and five minutes in bad weather. The pupils arrive home within an hour after starting, clean and dry instead of muddy and wet. Some facts about transportation in consolidated schools are that:

1. Transportation costs nine cents per day for each pupil.
2. There is no tardiness with transportation.
3. Attendance is at the maximum.
4. The driver signs a contract that specifies his duties.
5. He gives a three hundred dollar bond for the faithful performance of his duties.
6. He maintains order in the wagon and on the road.
7. The country is the place to educate the country children. The consolidated school puts a high school in reach of all children in the district taken in, and it educates the children for country life.

The building and the equipment are probably the next things uppermost in the thoughts of the people. A consolidated school building should always be planned with reference to community needs. First of all it must be an ideal structure for school use. This, however, need not in the least interfere with its having special features, which will be useful for general community purposes. Few consolidated school communities have a hall of sufficient size to accommodate their largest public gatherings with any degree of comfort. Such a room should be provided in every consolidated school building. This may be done by using some of the basement room where entrance and exit would not in any way involve the rest of the building, by using the space on the third floor under the roof, or by having a movable partition between the school rooms. The school house should contain as many class rooms as necessary, probably six or seven, besides the domestic science and manual training room and the gymnasium. The rooms should always be lighted by windows at the left and at the back. The old school building may be used for the domestic science and manual training rooms, and so decrease the cost of the new building.

The principal of the school should be a man raised on a farm, with professional training, teaching experience, and an understanding of country life and farm problems. Also, he should have an agricultural education, be hired for a year of twelve months, and should be used as an adviser by the farmers. The position of the principal of a consolidated school is a position for a man, and the salary should be large enough to attract such. His salary is generally between one hundred and one hundred seventy-five dollars per month. At least one teacher in a school of four or more departments should be qualified to teach sewing and cooking. There are generally four or five teachers in each school with salaries ranging from fifty-five to seventy-five dollars per month. The enlarged course of study, will include history, mathematics, language, domestic science, manual training, physical training, the sciences—physics and chemistry, and agriculture.

The pupils who will come to this school are those from the country districts whose parents cannot afford to send them away to high school, those who otherwise would lose interest in the school, after about the sixth grade, for want of something to hold their interest, such as glee clubs, bands, entertainments, and the society of other children of their own age.

Some of the objections to consolidation are: depreciation of property, necessity of children taking a cold lunch, transportation troubles, additional expense to parents is to provide proper clothing to attend the central school. In the first place, it is not true that the value of land decreases in the districts where the schools have been closed, but rather it is increased by having a large consolidated school so conveniently located. The matter of cold lunches can easily be remedied by using the domestic science room for a kitchen, and serving hot lunches at noon. The difficulty in the matter of transportation may easily be done away with by securing good drivers, teams and wagons, and by holding the drivers to their contracts. And last of all, the children should have respectable clothes, which is all that is required, at all times, whether going to a central school or not.

The benefits and advantages of consolidation far exceed the evils and disadvantages of it. Some of

Items of Interest Gleaned from Our Exchanges

Emerson Enterprise: Senator Haase spent Sunday at home. . . . Loretta Heeney, of Naacora, visited friends here over Sunday.

Obert Items in Wynot Tribune: C. W. Butler and W. C. Heikes were in Sioux City last week and while there Mr. Heikes purchased two car loads of cattle.

Daily Items in Ponca Advocate: Mrs. Fred Kipper, of Homer, visited her sister, Mrs. Frank Thomas, several days last week.

Fonda, Ia., Times: C. F. Young, a former Storm Lake boy, has been selected as county agent for Dakota county, Nebraska. The agent in that county is a county official and has an office in the court house at Dakota City.

Pender Republic: Dave Beacom visited relatives at Hubbard last Friday. Miss Hirsch came down from Homer Sunday for a visit with friends. Free Pounds was down from Hubbard for an over Sunday visit with home folks.

Osmond Republican: G. A. Ogburn hands us the following interesting item: His father, who lives at Hubbard, recently sold a load of yearlings that averaged 878 pounds. The price received was \$10.70, an average price of \$93.95. They were Short Horns.

Allen News: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hale were in town Tuesday and Wednesday visiting old friends and attending to business matters. W. J. Armour, a former resident of this place and now living at Sioux City, was in town Thursday and Friday. He is engaged in the automobile brokerage business.

the most important benefits and advantages are: The schools will have better equipment, such as maps, globes, books, laboratory apparatus, library and seats, the enlarged course of study; pupils may receive more individual aid from the teacher; in a country school the teacher has twenty-five or thirty classes each day and so has less than ten minutes to give to each recitation. Better equipment and better buildings will dignify the school and make it seem something larger to the community; pupils may secure a twelfth grade education and be at home with their parents every night; organizations such as debating societies, glee clubs, bands, base ball and basket ball teams will make school more attractive and contribute to the social life of the community, and will help make a more prosperous community because other people will wish to locate in the vicinity of the consolidated school.

Ponca Journal: Marie Sutherland, went to Jackson today. . . . Mrs. Fred Beerman, of near Coburn, visited the first of the week at the E. H. Cornell home. Wm. Ebel, of Dakota county, visited the first of this week at the Ferdinand Harder home about four miles west of Ponca.

Walthill Citizen: Henry Mathews and family moved to Homer Monday. . . . Mrs. F. E. Barney was a Homer visitor Tuesday and yesterday. . . . Miss Deana Crowell returned to her school in South Sioux City Sunday evening. . . . Miss Lena Mason was a South Sioux City passenger Friday evening. She returned home Saturday with her mother. . . . Mrs. Roy Waterman, of Missouri Valley, Ia., came home yesterday for a visit with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Lamson. . . . Mrs. G. O. Mason and children were down from Homer Sunday and spent the afternoon with W. H. Mason and family, returning in the evening.

Wynot Tribune: Mrs. H. A. McCormick visited over Sunday at Wayne with her daughter, Irene, who is attending the state normal. Deputy U. S. Marshal Wm. A. Morgan, of South Sioux City, was a business visitor in Wynot over Friday night. Mr. Morgan came to serve a summons on the officers of the Farmers Grain and Live Stock company in connection with some federal income tax suit that has been filed against the company through some error or misunderstanding on the part of the federal officers. The Tribune acknowledges a pleasant call from Mr. Morgan. We have known him for the past twenty-five years, he having formerly been a farmer and business man in Dakota county.

Pender Times: Mrs. J. F. Myers, of Sioux City, was a guest at the Judge Guy T. Graves home yesterday. . . . Last week, John Krusemark, of Thayer precinct, took the train for Dakota City, to visit some relatives he had not seen for many years. At Emerson a stranger got on the train, having come down from one of the branch lines, and as the seats were filled, he took a seat alongside Mr. Krusemark. They got to talking, and told each other about going to Dakota City to see relatives. The man from up the road showed Mr. Krusemark a picture of his mother, but strange as it is, neither told the other his name, and as Mr. Krusemark had no glasses, he did not recognize the picture as anyone he knew. At Dakota City they separated, the stranger saying that he was going to a certain house which they could see, but the Pender man said that he did not know where his relatives lived, and went up town. About half an hour later he wended his way back to the house which his traveling friend had pointed out to him—they were relatives but didn't know it.

Wakefield Republican: Mesdames J. B. Chase and L. Cooley spent

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**Dakota City
Grocery**

Specials for Saturday

- 2 pkgs Post Toasties.....25c
- 3 Bars Trilby Soap.....25c
- 2 pkgs Raisins.....25c
- 2 15c cans Baked Beans.....25c
- 2 pkgs Kellogg's Corn Flakes.....25c
- 3 Lamp Chimneys.....25c
- 50c can Cane-Maple Syrup.....45c
- 2 large Can of Tomatoes.....35c

**Highest Price Paid for
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W. L. ROSS

Dakota City, Nebraska

**G. F. Hughes
& Co.**

**Lumber, Building Material,
Hardware, Coal**

**To The People of
Dakota City & Vicinity**

WE have succeeded Mr. Fred Lynch in the Hardware and Lumber business in Dakota City, and are here to stay. Our aim will be to treat everyone right, and alike, and will guarantee satisfaction on all sales and work done at our place of business. We will carry a full line of Lumber, Building Material, Hardware, Coal, Paints, Plumbing Material, Greases and Oils. We have a well equipped shop where we will do all kinds of Plumbing, Tin Work, Furnace and Stove Repairs. Also Concrete Work of all Kinds.

**Come in and see us
Let's Get Acquainted**

H. R. GREER, Mgr. Dakota City, Nebr.