SHALL THE FUNDS BE WASTED

BY LOUIS C. ROBINSON, SUPERINTENDANT OF SCHOOLS FOR KENT COUNTY

By far the most important phase of the school consolidation program that was adopted recently by the Board of Education of Kent County is that which affects the welfare of the child. Those children who are now in the one-teacher schools will have much better conditions under which they can pursue their studies when transported to the central schools. Some of these advantages are:

1. More effective help from the teacher due to (1) the narrower subject matter field in which he has to make preparation and plan his work for each day (2) more frequent visits by the supervisor who helps the teacher to organize the subject matter in a more teachable form for the children, and to improve his way of guiding the pupils in their studies and checking on the results of teaching, (3) daily contact with other teachers in the building from whom helpful ideas are obtained, and (4) better physical conditions under which to work.

2. Association with many more children which will stimulate greater rivalry in the classroom and on the playground.

3. Opportunity to participate in school activities that require more pupils than are found in the one-room school.

4. More comfortably heated buildings in which to study and better sanitary conditions generally.

5. Closer inspection of their health by the public health authorities due to the smaller number of school centers to be visited and better conditions under which the children can be examined by the health doctor.

The number of white elementary school centers under the new organization will be reduced from twenty-six to ten: 3 two-teacher schools, 5 three-teacher schools, 1 school of six teachers, and 1 school of eight teachers. This will not only make possible the above advantages to the pupils who are now attending the oneteacher schools but will result in benefits to all pupils in the county. In every school, at all times of the year, there is a number of text books lying idle on the shelves of the bookcase. This idle capital in the one-room schools far exceeds that in the larger schools because there is much greater irregularity in sizes of classes in the former group of schools and it is this condition that causes idle books to accumulate so fast in a building. The smaller number of school centers will require less money for text books, maps and general school room equipment. This will make it possible for the Board of Education to provide the teachers with art materials and some means of visual education for which it has never had sufficient funds in the past. With these materials the teachers will be enabled to greatly enrich the work of the pupils.

Although there will still be vacant space in all of the central school buildings after the consolidation of schools has been effected, there are some people in the county who fear that these centers will be crowded in a few years which ill necessitate additional funds for buildings. For this to become necessary, there will have to be a decided change in the trend of the elementary school enrollment. During the past fifteen to twenty years there has been a steady decrease in the number of white elementary school children. The number on roll in the county at this time is approximately six hundred (600) less than it was in 1915.

Another matter in connection with the consolidation program that is causing some people no little concern is the dropping of eleven teaching positions. Of the teachers in the sixteen one-room schools to be closed, the best five will be selected by the county superintendent of schools for the new positions in the central schools. These selections will be based not only on the quality of work that the teachers are doing in their present positions but also on the conditions surrounding the situations in which the teachers are to be placed. Nine of the other eleven teachers involved in the program will be given precedence over any other applicants, both in the matter of substitute work and vacancies in regular positions, until all of them who wish to teach in Kent County have been placed. Those teachers of this group who go back to Normal School next year to get the third year of training that has recently been added to the regular Normal School course of study will be placed in positions before any others that are still on the waiting list in September, 1933. This will be by far the best course for them to take especially if it is their desire to teach school any number of years, for all elementary school teachers will be required to have the equivalent of the third year of Normal School training in a very few years. If the average number of vacancies in the elementary schools continues to be as great as it has been for the past two or three years all of the nine teachers will be back in service in the Kent County schools in two years or less.

Some of these teachers will probably find it somewhat of a hardship to be temporarily out of employment if they do not succeed in finding positions in other counties for next year. However, they realize fully that the Board of Education should not continue to waste public funds on unnecessary teaching positions.

In 1927, the writer made a careful study of the number of excess teachers (teachers who were not needed to carry the State minimum program of work) employed by the Board of Education of Kent County, Maryland, from 1917 to 1927. During this decade, the sum of one hundred thirteen thousand dollars ($113,000.) was wasted in salaries of unnecessary teachers. This waste probably went on for years before 1917, but this cannot be determined as records prior to that date were destroyed in the fire that occurred in the school board office in September, 1924. No excess teachers have been employed since 1927. Nevertheless, now that the county has a good system of hard-surface roads, and much better educational opportunities can be provided for the children in the outlying districts through consolidation of the one-teacher schools with the larger central schools, the eleven teachers referred to above are just as unnecessary as though they were excess teachers. If the Board of Education were to continue to carry these eleven teachers and one unnecessary high school teacher it would be guilty of wasting twelve thousand three hundred dollars ($12,300) of public funds each year or one hundred twenty-three thousand dollars ($123,000) each decade. The county cannot afford to pay out each year approximately one thousand dollars ($1,000) per teacher for the sole purpose of giving employment to twelve teachers who are not needed. There are probably other people in Kent County already on the unemployed list who think that they would be entitled to the same consideration.

Louis C. Robinson,
County Superintendent of Schools.

WORTON ITEMS

Sunday being Mother's Day there will be special services at the M. E. Church beginning at 3 p. m.

Miss Jane C. Cooper, of Baltimore, spent last week end with her sister, Mrs. James Matthews.

Mrs. Thomas Van Dyke is visiting her daughter, Mr. and Mrs. George T. Williams.

Mr. John Duyer is improving his home with a coat of paint.

Mrs. Julian Crew and little son, Julian Lee spent a few days this week with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Lee.

Mrs. Alan Rouse, of Philadelphia, is the guest of her sister. Mrs. Henry Williams.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Taylor spent Sunday with relatives at Grasonville.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Taylor, of Wilmington, visited Mr. and Mrs. Charles Joiner last week end.

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