

1944, February

Letters from Readers

Larger School Districts

Sir. – On Monday, February 7th, you displayed a picture of the new two-roomed school erected at St. Eustache Sur-le-Lac I the school district of Grand Fresniere.

Any improvement in the direction of better educational facilities in our Province is to be highly commended. However, it would be interesting to know how many of the Protestant ratepayers of St. Eustache and Plage Laval are happy about the 280% increase in their school tax bill to pay for the erection of the school.

As time goes on, many more communities, now smugly satisfied with an antiquated one-roomed schoolhouse and underpaid teacher, will be forced by more enlightened and progressive school board members to contribute much more than they do at present, through higher taxation, for the provision of one of the country's greatest needs – better education.

Unfortunately there are other communities who have been paying a high tax rate such as 20 mills in Arundel, in comparison with 3.5 mills in the district of Grand Fresniere (boosted from 2.5 mills in 1940).

There will be no solution to the gross inequalities of school taxation in this Province until such time as the ratepayers give support to the efforts being made to introduce larger administrative units of education. A Provincial enactment passed in 1942 permitted the adoption of this plan on a voluntary basis by school districts throughout the Province. This plan was recommended by the Hepburn Survey Committee on Education in 1937. Several counties like Compton, Chambly and others have adopted this plan.

One of its purposes is to equalize valuations and tax rates over a large area, and from an elected central board govern and control the needs of the various school districts, with their cooperation. In the proposed area, which would embrace the district of Grand Fresniere, the needs of this district would be studied and possibly a union with neighboring districts would have proved more beneficial to a greater number, at less cost to the ratepayers of one particular community.

Unfortunately the isolationist policy of building small schools in certain communities actually represents a retrograde step in any plan to organize education on a broad and all-embracing scope. Transportation from small communities to the large "Academy" complete to the 12th grade, such as Huntingdon, Richmond, Lachute, etc., is the goal to be aimed at, rather than a perpetuation of the small unit with its consequent narrow educational limits.

J.V. Waddell

Ste. Rose, Quebec, February 14

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=LL8tAAAAIBAI&sjid=opgFAAAAIBA&pg=4149%2C8011094>