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Address: THE GARDEN ISLAND, Lihue Kauai.

OUR SCHOOLS ARE CRITICISED

EDITOR GARDEN ISLAND.

Your writer having been connected with school work under the system in England for several years, on arriving here some months since, naturally felt interested in the work being carried on in this department here. It is not for me to offer criticism in regard to the present methods employed, rather instead, to give a fair view of how the administration of school affairs appear to an outsider.

Age Limit

I find that at the age of six a child is enrolled in the public school, and on attaining the age of fifteen is released from school by the principal, that compulsory laws in regard to attending school exists, and that when the child leaves school it usually does so with a feeling of great relief in so doing.

Reasons Etc.

Parents of these children are, as a rule, of a laboring class, usually have large families, and feel the necessity of placing the boy and girl in an earning position at the very first opportunity. This from the parents side. One other, and to me, the chief reason for this desire to leave school, is lack of methods and results. The chief aim in giving a child an education, is to prepare the same to improve his or her future. To go out into the world able to do some one or more things sufficiently well to earn a livelihood thereby. How many boys and girls who are turned out of the public schools here today, can do this? How many can write a correct sentence in English? How many boys are able to step into a cane field and direct the proper cultivation of cane? Yet, cane is to Kauai, what the very air is to the individual—its entire support. Nature study and manual training is given but a fleeting touch in our present methods, yet it is, (in a rural community) one of the most important subjects to be taught. I have visited different schools on the island, and in every instance have found the teacher most conscientiously endeavoring to carry out plans, which to her mean a position, but to the child, little less than a jumble of meaningless words. The method is, however, an excellent one when applied to a single grade school. But as there are few of these on Kauai, it seems to me that the method of instruction should be governed pretty much by prevailing conditions. In many instances a teacher has as many as three grades. The reading class in one such school on the occasion of one of my visits recited, and there was certainly much room to withhold my approval of this method. For instance, a member of, say the second grade, would read, then one in the third, and next a member of the fourth would read, a child of the second grade again reading. Now, then, not counting on the possibility of the members of each class losing all interest in the lesson, as amounting to anything, there is to be taken into consideration, the fact that this reading class must contain thirty to forty pupils, all of whom have but twenty minutes in which to read the lesson. As much as it is impossible for these pupils to get individual reading, within this time it strikes your writer that this is a system capable of much attention from the proper source. Reading in concert is done in some instances, which in your writer's opinion is liable to prevent the child from securing correct pronunciation. Other studies are given in five and ten minute periods, the pupil and teacher hurrying through, with their minds equally divided between the clock and the lesson, the results of which are obvious. A program so divided as to permit for more time in number work, language and manual training, would, I believe, be an improvement on the

present system. The daily programs are not all carried out to the letter however, some being unable to apply it to prevailing conditions, while others "add" a little. For instance, take "morning exercises." The daily plan allows ten minutes for this subject, but I dare say, that there are no two teachers on the island who are able, or at least do, use the same time for this exercise. One of the most important schools (Kealia) devotes nearly half an hour to these exercises twice or three times each week. I am not finding fault with patriotic exercises. I am simply at a loss to know what happens to the classes whose study period begins at the conclusion of the supposed ten minute exercise. I have been told that these periods are skipped for the day and the program is taken up by the next lesson in turn. Be this as it may, my point is this: that a program for all schools as far as the day's plan for work is concerned, should be identically carried out. The present method as regards the classification of pupils by grades i. e. having for instance, fifth grade pupils throughout the entire island in the same lessons at the same hour during the day, is an excellent idea and will result in a tendency upon the part of the pupil who is leaving one school with a transfer to another, to do his utmost in his studies that he may make a creditable showing in the like grade in his new school. Under the prevailing circumstances it is generally conceded that educational matters have been considerably improved within the last school year, and some material changes looking for further betterment are contemplated for next year.

Teaching and Supervising

The Kauai teachers are, as a whole, men and women of excellent character and of proven ability, working, with the exception of few instances, in perfect harmony with our supervising principal, who in conjunction with School Commissioner W. H. Rice, Sr., is given full authority over school matters. The beginning of the present school year, saw our schools placed under a supervising principal, with a view of systematizing the work. The Supervising Principal, Mr. C. O. Smith, is a very capable teacher, having had many years experience as instructor in some of the leading schools of the islands, and has accomplished considerable in carrying out the aims of the department. Not however, without much criticism for from many sources, one hears critical remarks which is a condition natural to expect in the introduction of "new methods." Such criticisms, are in most part, of a nature entirely void of malice—of the methods and not the least personal. Pioneer work of any nature is always more or less fraught with difficulties scarcely met with in any other stage of the game, and while in this instance, much criticism may seem justified, yet it is the consensus of well posted people, that the appointment of supervising principals, will prove to be a step in the right direction in so much as it will bring about system and a concentration of school work.

Buildings and Teachers

Upon the Territory rests the responsibility of furnishing the teaching staff, while it is up to the county to furnish and equip the buildings. A show down, would probably give cause for both to do something other than dealing in self compliments, as there is always a shortage of good teachers as well as a place to put them. A shortage of teachers is due I am told, to the poverty stricken condition of the Territorial Treasury, while no excuse can be necessary for the lack of buildings, when we consider that a certain district spent twenty years more or less, securing a suitable building. Now that bonds are available, there does not seem a reasonable excuse for housing the children fifty and sixty in a bunch, in rooms entirely inadequate for two-thirds that number. Understand that a new teachers' salary schedule goes into effect in September. Let us hope it will be such as to induce some of our young men to look upon this profession as one with a future,—one from which a living can be obtained.

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AN ENGLISHMAN.

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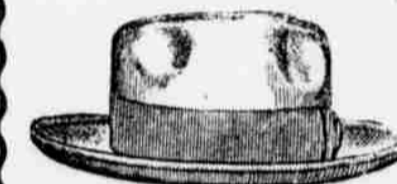
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