RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

In connection with
Sanitary Inspection and Control of Schools.

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(ASSOCIATE).

THERE is no denying the fact that if the conditions of schools now all worked by one authority in a locality are to be uniformly improved and maintained, a new official must be appointed; and as that official's duties touch both health and education, it seems a point of discussion as to whose servant he or she shall be.

Properly qualified inspectors can only be made by careful training, and there will always be the danger of such inspectors becoming too official, and thus losing touch with the teachers.

Teachers are already heavily weighted with responsibilities, but they must be made to realise that, though their effective administration may be aided by efficient inspectors, actual daily care in providing fresh air, inculcating cleanliness, and teaching the children to use all sanitary appliances with cleanly decency, is a responsibility which cannot be shifted to other people's shoulders.

The teachers suffer considerably from the casual and often inefficient services of the school caretaker. As a class these people require very careful supervision, and great care should be taken in their selection. No person should be considered eligible for such a situation who does not understand the primary law of personal cleanliness and recognized methods of cleaning. In speaking of sanitation in schools, one thinks of it always as education from a fundamental point of view, and puts in, therefore, a strong claim for the best and simplest apparatus, whether in lavatories or other sanitary conveniences. Our children are the future tenants of dwellings superior to those of their fathers if the solving of the housing problem means anything, and we are bound to teach them to live cleaner, and make better use of their opportunities.

People who have seen much of school buildings know that they are

very unequal. There has been extravagance in buildings and apparatus in some parts of the country, whilst in others the common needs of our girls, boys, and teachers have been little better attended to than the animals on old-fashioned farm property.

If we wish to see cottage and artisan property better kept in the future, we must set the standard of cleanliness and decency higher amongst the children of to-day, and as five hours of their working day are spent in school, there are great possibilities given to form lasting decent physical habits and cleanly mental impressions.

Teachers desirous of inculcating such habits will welcome a qualified inspector who can at once detect unwholesome atmosphere, badly-lighted rooms, uncleanly walls, windows and floors, unsuitable desks, defective and ill-kept sanitary conveniences; and can, by means of reporting, teaching, and acting as responsible medium between authorities, managers, teachers, and caretakers, effect a reformation which will lead to real improvement in child-health and child-training.

The responsibilities of local education authorities are therefore the heavier, in that they are or will be responsible for the appointment of inspectors who shall be capable of so improving the ventilation and cleanliness of schools and their premises, that all authorities may be able to offer mutual congratulations on the decrease of filth-disease amongst children, and a consequent improvement in general public health.

Unfortunately, however, the authorities themselves need stimulating and educating, and all corporate bodies, which have now such an immense power in their hands, should exert their influence to introduce co-opted members who, though not teachers, are educational experts, or have made special study of certain branches of educational work.

Two points should be considered by all local authorities: (1) to co-opt members for personal ability and knowledge, not for reasons too often considered in municipalities and County Councils (such as political proclivities and religious opinions); (2) wherever the area and the population are large and, consequently, difficult to work, to avail themselves of their power to co-opt more than two women to their educational committee.