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A-13

WILL CALL UPON THE COURTS TO DECIDE THE MATTER

Letter From Mr. R. L. Phillips Dealing With the Refusal of Trustees to Permit His Daughter to Continue Her Studies at the Charlotte Street School—Says There Are Now Only Thirteen Pupils in Miss Thompson's Department.

Fredericton, N. B., Oct. 2, 1916.
Mr. Editor,—I wish to call the attention of the public to a chapter of School Board History, subsequent to my letter of the 13th of September.

Before doing so, I would like to say that since that letter was published two parents have been enabled to secure admittance for their children to a school in this city, to which previous to that time they had been in more than one instance positively refused admittance. A little light in dark places helps out.

It will be remembered that on Tuesday, September 12th, my daughter was informed that she could not longer attend Charlotte Street School; that on the same day I applied to Dr. Vanwart, chairman of the Board, asking that action in this case be postponed until the next regular meeting of the Board, when I would like to present my case. Dr. Vanwart refused to grant my request, and the next day noon personally called on Miss Thompson, and as a result of this interview Miss Thompson immediately telephoned me that she could not longer receive my daughter in her department. I then published my letter of the 13th ult., which called attention to the fact that because of the personal action of the chairman of the School Board my daughter had

been expelled from one school, and that the Board had not intimated to me where I might send her, to continue her education. This letter was read by the Chairman of the Board and the other members.

Knowing that where pupils had been transferred some two weeks earlier, the Board had attended to all the details of transfer in every case, and that in no case had it been up to the parent to find admission to another school, I expected the Board to do the same in my case.

Refused Admittance.

On Monday, September 18th, I took my daughter to Miss Taylor at Smythe Street School, Mr. Burns, at the Model School, and to Mr. Hughes at Regent Street, School, being all the 7th and 8th grades in this city with the exception of Miss Thompson's and was in turn refused admittance at each of these schools. It was not until I had personally interviewed three trustees that I was furnished with a permit to have my daughter attend any school.

While talking with two trustees on the 18th ult., one of them suggested that this matter was sufficiently serious to justify calling a special meeting of the Board. In this connection I wish to note that while the Chairman

professed to be very willing to hear me before the Board, yet by forcing my daughter out of school in the interim, he was practically closing the case before I appeared at the meeting. Acting on the suggestion of the trustee mentioned, I wrote the Board and asked that a special meeting be called to deal with the matter. The Secretary replied, informing me that he was directed (by the Chairman, I presume) to say that no special meeting could be called. After this at least two members of the Board called on Dr. Vanwart and asked him to call a special meeting, which he refused to do.

Met the School Board.

On Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 27th, at 4.15 p. m., I was invited to appear before the Board. I was on hand on time and had to wait a few minutes before a quorum appeared. At no time when I was present was there more than a quorum, or five members, present. I called the attention of the Board to the following facts:

That my daughter had been in Miss Thompson's department for one year. That it was an injustice to remove her at that time, and that they had not removed any other pupils in any grade in the city under similar conditions.

That their transfers had been made the first days of the school term, but in the case of my daughter, the third week was well advanced before any intimation was made regarding a change, and I considered this an added injustice.

That in the case of all other transfers, so far as the parents were concerned, the changes had been automatic, while I had been singled out for an entirely different mode of procedure, and that no arrangements had been made to place my daughter anywhere else.

That in Miss Thompson's Grade VIII (from which my daughter had been removed) there were only thirteen pupils and she had thirteen vacant seats; consequently the change was not justified by any requirements of school districts.

Says Class is Small.

After establishing boundaries and finding it impossible to work with the boundaries as at first established, and after transferring some pupils both ways (contrary to the requests of their parents) the School Board have a Grade VIII of thirteen members in Miss Thompson's room, and Miss Thompson being pre-eminently one of the successful Grade VIII teachers in the Province, is compelled to work with a Grade VIII of one-half its capacity, the ratepayers and parents of the city thus losing the advantage of Miss Thompson's work—and the Board have looked upon it and pronounced it good, and refused my request that my daughter be permitted to conclude her grade VIII studies where she took her grade VII work and started the grade VIII.

Wants Fair Treatment.

The School Board has unquestionably very large powers; they are protected by law in ways that no other

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board, corporation or individual is protected, but I submit that these powers and this protection are given them with the idea that they shall always be exercised in the public interest. Because I do not believe it is in the public interest that Miss Thompson should be compelled to carry on her grade VII with thirteen pupils and thirteen empty seats; because I do not believe that it is in the public interest that pupils should be arbitrarily removed from one school to another in the middle of a two-term period; because I do not believe that it is fair to transfer one pupil during the first days of a school year and another in the third week of the term; because I do not believe that it is in the public interest to transfer one pupil from one school to another and merely expel another pupil; but because I believe these actions have been the actions of a body of men and women who because some have had a seat at the School Board for years—and who because an appointment to a School Board generally means a life appointment—have grown to feel that they have no responsibility to the public, but may act in as arbitrary or uncalled for a manner as they like—I have asked my solicitor to take immediate steps to put this matter before the courts.

I may say that in looking over the list of the fortunate members of this class thirteen, I was surprised to note that one of the members enjoying, at public expense, the extra privileges accruing because of this arbitrarily restricted class, is the son of a trustee who has had considerable to say in this matter.

Wants Vacancies Filled.

In talking with the trustees, I suggested that the boundary line be adhered to, as a basis of filling the schools, then if there were vacancies, that the Secretary have the right to transfer any pupil, as long as there were vacancies. If there were no vacancies, no parent could find fault for not having his wish complied with.

This would entail only a little work for the Secretary, the paid official of the Board, and I believe that the Secretary would have no objection whatever to doing the extra work.

Just here I want to say that in the ten years in which I have had children attending the public schools in this city, I have always found Secretary Sampson courteous and obliging and ready to grant any reasonable request in his power. I wish that I could say the same for those higher up.

Thanking you, Mr. Editor, for space in your columns, I remain,

Yours very truly,
R. L. PHILLIPS.

Yes, you are right, Mr. Simp, a man's life shouldn't be entirely absorbed in going fishing—there's shooting, and golf, for instance.

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MISS MORGAN Queen Street

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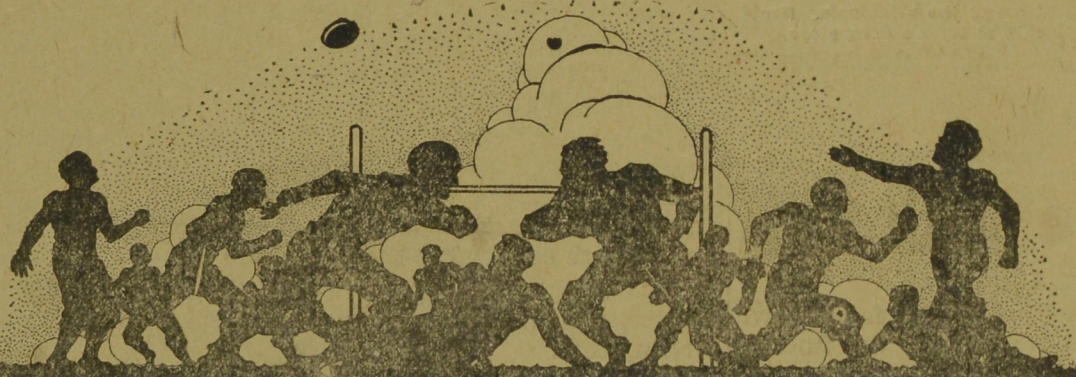
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