

The School Children of Loudoun County

by Supt. O. L. Emerick

This series of articles is being written with the single purpose of giving information about the condition of our schools. An effort is ~~being~~^{being} made to present the simple facts without the use of any coloring through word play. A great mass of information is on file in the office of the superintendent of schools and this will always be cheerfully furnished or interpreted for any one seeking information.

It is with the ~~thought~~^{thought} that ~~our~~^{our} more intelligent people will be glad to have some light thrown on the school system and the condition of our schools as a whole, and have this done ~~so~~ so that they may sit by the fireside and get it with this thought that ~~ix~~ undertake the labor of preparation of these articles.

HAMMERMILL
BOND

The most important single factor in a school is our children. All other things, building, ground, equipment, teacher, and school officers exist for them. Given a group of intelligent, healthy, and well-behaved children and we have good indication of parents in kind back home. Then we should normally expect excellent school conditions because such parents of such children are going to demand a good teacher and building and keep on demanding until their aims are realized.

Our latest census lists a total of 5,649 children of ages 7 to 19 inclusive, 4,213 white and ~~ix~~ 1,436 colored.

Not all of the colored children are black, it is really a surprising and a shocking condition to observe how many of the "colored" children in several of our schools are "white".

~~out~~ Of 517 children 8 years old in the county 500 were in school last year. Of 428 15 years old of whom probably none had completed high school 256 were enrolled. This indicates that nearly half of our children drop out of school by the time they have reached the age of 15. Is this not evidence that we need a more effective compulsory attendance law?

Last year 861 of our children did not enter school for a day. During the time school was open an average of 2,559 were not in school each day, or only 55 per cent of all children of school ages were in school each day. Our encouragement here lies in the fact that this is the highest percentage of ~~average~~ average attendance in the history of our county school system and that with less children in the county we had 500 more in school than 20 years ago.

By grades our enrollment runs ~~from~~ ^{from} grade to grade almost like stair steps. Witness 1,185 in first grade, 588 in fourth grade, 522 in seventh grade, and 65 in eleventh grade. The abnormally large number, of nearly one-fourth of all children enrolled last year were in the first grade. Besides plain failures by children in their work there are three other factors contributing to bring about this condition. The first is the admission of children in the spring of each year when they could not be expected to complete the grade, the

second is the idea of a few teachers that there must be a primer grade and first grade each requiring one year for completion. The third is a short term of less than nine months. We can not expect nine months' work to be done in seven or eight months. As fast as we can we are working toward a correction of these conditions so that all children will enter the first grade in the fall and nearly all will be promoted at the end of the year, provided of course the term is nine months, and we hope to make it that for all white schools in a few years.

A normal child with the standard advantages of a nine months' school term and a good teacher should enter school at seven years of age, complete the seventh grade at 13 years, and the fourth year of high school at 17 years (ages as of September or school opening.) Taking this as the standard 2104 of our 4788 children enrolled last year were too old by from 1 to 9 years for the grade in which they were classified. This retarded condition is due to many factors including irregular attendance, poor teachers, short school terms, poor health of children caused by in part by adenoids, enlarged tonsils, and unsanitary school buildings, and sub-normal intelligence. Our feelings are partly compensated by the fact that there were 746 who were under-age, that is were advanced than the standard requires. However, about half of these are in the first grade where children enter at six years.

A distressingly large number of our children have physical defects and colds and more serious epidemics are all too preva-

lent among the children. Efforts are being made to improve these conditions through health clinics, the school nurse, health training for teachers, more sanitary provisions for handling drinking water, improved ventilating systems in the building, et cetera.

In general terms the boys and girls of Loudoun County school might be described in about the same language that we should use in describing a few thousand other boys and girls in some other part of America except that these in Loudoun are our very own and ~~close~~^{hence} to us better and more precious than any other several thousand. They are potential farmers, lawyers, school teachers, merchants, bankers, doctors, engineers, statesmen, governors, cabinet officers, and presidents. It is in the power of adults tax-payers to give them the tools in the form of well-developed bodies and minds, as well as spirits ~~xx~~ filled with burning desire to make the world better, and we have the very definite obligation to do our utmost in providing every safe-guard in their training.