

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Runs Down a False Report Concerning One of the Teachers. Facts are Given Below.

MR. EDITOR.

The school board begs space in the Courier to lay before the public the facts in a matter that has agitated the people of our city of late. January 31st Mr. Benjamin Tufte at the request of several parents of pupils in our school, addressed a letter to the school board calling attention to the fact that it was the report about town that Miss Weed, teacher of the fifth grade room, had made the statement while teaching geography "that the Norwegians and Swedes as a race, were a dirty people." This remark if made was to the A geography class the first part of November and had smoldered and rankled in the minds of the people for three months before being laid before the school board. The board considered Miss Weed one of our best and most successful teachers and proceeded at once to investigate.

Mr. Berg being out of town Mr. Tufte was invited to sit with the board during the investigation and we print below his conclusions. The board found the facts to be as follows:

There are 24 pupils in a A geography class. Twenty-two of these were examined by the board. One, Carl Johnson, said he heard the teacher make the remark referred to. twenty say positively that she did not make the remark and one was in doubt. Ten of those who say she did not make the remark sit in front of and nearer the teacher than Carl Johnson. Twenty-one of the twenty-two examined say they never heard the matter mentioned until last Monday, Jan. 31st, or the Friday before. One thought she heard it mentioned at Christmas time. Miss Weed denied positively making any such remark or anything like it. Carl said that what she said was read from a book. This gave the board a clue. During their study of geography Miss Weed reads to the class from Carpenter's geographical reader. This is supposed to be a traveler's story of what he saw in a trip through the various countries. As the class studies about Norway and Sweden Miss Weed read from this reader the traveler's account of his trip through these countries. On pages 168 and 169 of this book which she read to them at this time is found the following:

"A part of Sweden is colder in winter than Norway, although both countries are covered with snow for months at a time. The people go about upon sleds and skates, and they travel from one place to another upon long snowshoes or skis. They have tobogganing parties, and enjoy themselves coasting down the steep hills. Leaving Trondhjem, we sail northward inside the islands, by snow clad mountains, upon the sides of which great glaciers hang. We cross the Arctic Circle, and then stay for a day at Tromso to have a look at a village of Laplanders not far away. Some of the Lapps live in tents made of skins stretched upon poles, with a hole in the top for the smoke to go out. Others have huts of stone and earth,

but everything is of the rudest description.

The people gather round us as we walk through their little town, offering to pose for our cameras. How dirty they are and how small! They look like dwarfs. The men are about five feet tall and the women about six inches shorter. They are dressed in reindeer skins with the fur on the inside. They belong to the yellow race, and their complexions are almost as yellow as their leather clothing, their skins having been darkened by the smoke which fills their tents the greater part of the time."

After this book was produced the above was read to Carl Johnson and he said it was what Miss Weed read before the class and he thinks includes all she read or said about the subject, and that he thought the Swedes and Norwegians were included in the "dirty" race. The board concludes that the whole matter grew out of a misunderstanding of the above paragraph. We think Carl was honest in his statement but as a matter of fact was mistaken. The board further concludes that the above paragraph includes all that Miss Weed said or read upon the subject and that she did not say or repeat the language attributed to her and we exonerate her completely and fully.

We are glad the matter was brought to the attention of the board. It would be much better if all such matters could be laid before the board for investigation before they are made the subject of gossip and town talk. The facts should be ascertained before teachers are accused and discord stirred up.

DAVID BARTLETT,
E. W. BLACKWELL,
P. A. MELGARD.

I, A. H. Berg, being absent from home and not present at the above meetings of the board, have since made personal inquiry and satisfied myself that the said finding are true.

A. H. BERG.

Cooperstown, N. D., Feb. 2, '10.
Board of Education, City.

Gentlemen: On January 31st I wrote you concerning a current report that one of the teachers of the public schools of this city had stated to the fifth grade geography class that the Norwegians, Swedes and Danes were a dirty class of people or words to that effect. The remarks were reported to have been made during school hours and while the class was studying the geography of the Scandinavian peninsula.

At the request of some members of your board I was present and took part in the investigation started by you and examined the pupils of the fifth grade as well as the teacher in reference to the matter. Realizing that the matter amiss should be set right I deem it proper to explain to you the conclusions I drew from the evidence produced. In my opinion the evidence showed clearly that the whole report rested upon a misunderstanding on the part of the pupils who maintained that the remarks were made.

Plainly the whole trouble arose from

the reading by the teacher, of a harmless sketch written by a traveler who once upon a time had visited the northern part of Norway and there observed the manners and customs of the Laplanders. The sketch was incorporated in a geographical reader used as a text book in the school. The expressions there used may not be very complimentary to the Laplanders but the language used was in my opinion so harmless that even a grown up Laplander might have passed it over undisturbed and the teacher could not very well anticipate any trouble on account of reading it.

The young lady should certainly not be blamed nor should those pupils who stoutly maintained that she had made the remarks be criticized. The contents of the book read to the pupils might easily cause them to think that she had made the remark. Even older people than fifth grade pupils are liable to get the premises mixed and draw erroneous conclusions.

This little incident has, maybe, caused some worry and an efficient teacher, who, as far as I could understand, had the love and respect of her pupils has been wronged and possibly it has made it harder for her to perform the work she had undertaken to do in this city.

The incident, I think, should teach us two things; first, that in a community like ours where so many different nationalities have found a home and their children sent to school we cannot be too careful in selecting geographical readers or readers that contain opinions of the author; second, it should teach the parents to consider and think of many things before they unconditionally accept as true the statements made by school children. They may honestly think they are right but still be wrong.

Yours respectfully,
BENJAMIN TUFTTE.

ANNUAL MEETING.

The annual meeting of the stockholders of the Griggs County Fair Association will be held at the Fire Hall in Cooperstown, on Monday, February 21st. Those who cannot attend should send their proxies.

Theo. G. Thompson, Sec.

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