

High School Closings Have Become Too Costly

Chief Supt. of Education as President of N. B. Teachers' Institute, Says Control Must be Exercised—Also Mentions Distractions From School Work—\$3,400,000 Spent Annually on Schools of New Brunswick—Textbook Matters.

The New Brunswick Teachers' Institute in its first session this afternoon, held in the Assembly Hall of the new High School, heard the annual address of the President Dr. W. S. Carter, Chief Supt. of Education. Dr. Carter as usual made an address which contains much which is worthy of thought. Many of the pressing educational problems of the day were touched upon by him as well as problems peculiar to the Province of New Brunswick. The address was heard with marked interest.

Chief Superintendent.

The address of Dr. W. S. Carter, Chief Superintendent of Education and president of the Association was as follows:

At the last meeting of this Institute, held in Moncton, there was a very strong sentiment voiced to hold the next meeting during Easter week, and the Executive was instructed to give the matter consideration.

The Executive gave due attention to the proposal when it was found, that there were difficulties in the way, which had not been foreseen, when the proposition had been presented.

Fredericton was entitled to this meeting, in accordance with the usual rotation, and the teachers in the western section of the Province expressed a strong desire to have it there, which the Executive endorsed.

At Easter dates proposed, the Normal School and University would be in Session, as also the Legislature, with the usual number of transient visitors in connection therewith. This would render the accommodation of the large number of teachers who were expected to attend difficult, if not impossible. Beside, the assistance we usually receive from the Normal School Staff, would not be available. So that it was either Saint John at Easter, or Fredericton at the end of June, and the latter date was decided upon for the present session. If you decide to have the Institute two

years hence at Easter, in Saint John, the difficulty of accommodation will not arise, though unless the Normal School and University be closed, we shall not be able to call upon their faculties, as we have many times in the past.

It seems to me, considering the nature of the Season and travel conditions during Easter Week, that we are rather fortunate that we postponed it until June.

Some Statistics.

As has been my habit in the past, I shall first bring to your notice recent changes in the School Law and Regulations, necessarily touching briefly upon them, and later discuss some of our problems, as we shall never reach the stage where we shall not have them.

According to statistics, last year was the best in the history of our Public Schools, and the two preceding years were record ones.

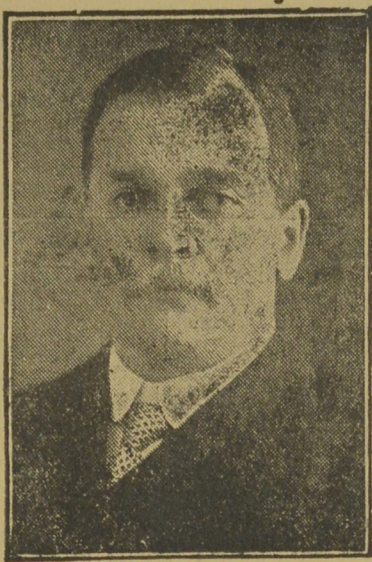
There were approximately 80,000 pupils in attendance, 2450 teachers engaged, in 2,300 schools.

The attendance has not only increased, but also the regularity, due no doubt, to some extent to Medical School inspection and the prevention of contagious diseases.

Large Sum Expended.

There was expended, according to the returns made, nearly \$3,400,000 for Education, from County Funds, Provincial Grants and School Districts—a substantial sum,—but lest we should seem extravagant, I may add that the cost of Education in this Province is less than in any other Province in Canada, except one or two, and less than one half that of the highest.

There has been a marked increase in High School attendance, and this, in the face of our usual disadvantages, in that we make a poor showing on paper for all above Standard V in Ungraded Schools, as they are not accurately reported in the returns; and



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President N. B. Teachers' Institute.

in the French Districts many pupils obtain their High School instruction in Convent Schools, and of course, are not reported to us.

School Attendance.

When dealing with the matter of school attendance, it may be well to point out that some injustice has been done us as to illiteracy. Unlike the other Provinces, the age for admission to schools here is six. In the past, the Dominion Census enumerator reported as illiterate those over five years of age not in attendance at School. In consequence, this Province has lost in the census count, all children between the ages of five and six, estimated between 20,000 and 25,000.

In the future, we shall have a better chance, as it is proposed to enumerate in groups. The Dominion statistician, who visited us a few weeks ago, informed me that in the group under ten years of age, Quebec and New Brunswick ranked very high. It has been alleged as one of the causes of our poor showing in the past, that it was due to the French Districts. This I doubt very much, whatever may have been conditions years ago, today the French Districts are as well provided with Schools as the English. If they do not make as good showing in High School attendance, it is hard to say, if their attendance at private schools were taken in account, whether they

would suffer by comparison. French candidates are taking full Normal School training in progressively increasing numbers and very often they are among the leaders in our examinations, nor is this due to the bonus. It frequently occurs that English Candidates make higher marks on the bonus than the French Teachers.

Teachers Plentiful.

The supply of teachers, for the first time in many years, exceeds the demand. This has enabled every district to secure a teacher and local licenses are no longer issued. This is an advantage and a disadvantage. An ideal condition would be to supply equal to demand. This however can not well be, and as it does not seem expedient to stimulate a supply of teachers greatly in excess of demand by further granting loans to student teachers, many of whom would not be able to secure employment, the Board of Education has ordered that no more loans be granted after the end of the present school year. As it has always been a business transaction requiring interest at 6 per cent, no great hardship can result.

Loans were an emergency war measure to encourage a better supply of teachers and were not intended to continue after that end had been attained.

Enrollment at P. N. S.

At one time we were three or four hundred short—Normal School attendance fell off, nearly one half, teachers were going to the other Provinces giving better salaries or entering into other occupations wholesale—while costs of living had more than doubled, few districts had volunteered to increase salaries during the war. Loans and minimum salaries gradually relieved the situation and gave teachers some assurance for the future. Normal School attendance increased to such an extent as to tax the accommodation of that institution beyond its capacity (and at present the enrolment has been limited to three hundred (300), which is all that can be adequately provided for.

At present no teacher gets less than \$500 per year from all sources—not an excessive salary any one will admit, considering the added costs of living—on the maintenance of these salaries the future of our teacher supply depends. Given unlimited salary competition and it will not be long before teachers will be as scarce and as hard to obtain at any price as during the war, and our last state will be worse than our first.

Our amended Pension legislation, embracing a disability clause and enabling those who climb to the higher positions to earn a larger pension is encouraging to those who make teaching their profession.

Teachers' Pensions.

At the present time we are spending approximately \$20,000 per year in pensions, of which the teachers contribute about four fifths. The contribution of the Province is however increasing year by year, as was expected, and will continue to do so until equilibrium is reached.

Teachers will observe the large interest they have in this fund and should carefully guard it for themselves and their successors. Any breach in the Act will be regarded as a precedent for others and will be dangerous. With the approbation of the teachers, University of New Brunswick Professors holding valid licenses to teach have been allowed to come in, by paying the maximum dues and arrearages with compound interest. Some other applications have been made. I would suggest as to these, that it is a good rule to take on our rolls only those whose service is a matter of record as is the case with all our teachers.

Text Book Changes.

Teachers will be glad to know that definite steps have been taken to provide for changes in many text-books, so long needed and so often promised. The delay has not in any way been due to lack of interest or initiative on the part of your Text Book Committee. The causes for delay were various, and among them, High Costs, Unsettlement of World Conditions, Limited perspective since the war, disinclination to stir up the man on the street, by adding new texts to education costs, especially, when elections are pending.

For a long time there has been an opinion forming that in our selection of texts we should harmonize at least with the Maritime Provinces, in the interests of economy and for other obvious reasons. Our present Board of Education is strongly in favor of this policy and I am instructed that in the near future, committees from each of these provinces will meet to that end. In the meantime, sub-committees of the New Brunswick Text Book Committee have had various texts under review, and at Easter made several recommendations which will come before the general committee. More progress would no doubt have been made, but for the fact that matters educational are somewhat unsettled in Nova Scotia, owing to pending changes there.

Committee's Good Work.

I hope to be in a position to have the changes made at the beginning of July, 1927. I desire here to express my obligation to the present Text Book Committee for their untiring work and interest in this matter. I think in the interests of the schools and teachers, the knowledge and experience they have gained of texts should not be lost too soon, and that we should not change horses when crossing a stream. I hope you may see your way clear to continue this Committee until at least its work has been completed.

While the sub-committees of the Text Book Committee have done strenuous work upon text books, it is light in comparison with the labor which will be involved in formulating the revised courses of instruction.

Where two or three teachers are gathered together there is usually a difference of opinion regarding the work prescribed for the various grades or standards. You will bear in mind that your committees are composed of the most skillful and experienced teachers, whose only object is to do justice in as far as possible, to all. We shall ask your forbearance and sympathy in the matter. It is very likely any course will be tentative for the time, and no doubt some adjustments will have to be made.

Destructive Criticism.

Our courses of instruction at present are much more meagre than those of some other provinces. I think it may be said of us truthfully, that we do not indulge in luxuries, and that the fundamentals occupy the prominent places, nevertheless we do not escape criticism, mostly of a destructive kind, a favored expression is, "The course is overloaded", with no suggestions of any compulsory subject that should be dropped.

The bulk of our work in common school grades is furnished on the requirements of the 3 R's. To these are added a little history, geography, grammar and elementary science. Does anyone suggest that we could do with less?

Our High School course has abolished Latin and Greek as compulsory subjects. I do not think if our boys and girls are to keep step with the times and compete with others, with any justice to them, we could do less. We are very proud of their records both at home and abroad, and I do not think that we should put them at a disadvantage. We have been deficient in the past in the subject of Physics, one of the most important of any curriculum. Already some colleges look askance at this lack in our training, and we shall have to amend it.

Some Changes Made.

In a paper of this length, which I have written for the purpose of conciseness, it would be impossible without taxing your patience too greatly, to dwell at length on the various changes which have come into operation since our last meeting. Among the most important may be mentioned, votes for married women—wives of qualified ratepayers—at school meetings, and also their eligibility to act as School Trustees.

This change will no doubt be conducive to the display of a greater amount of interest in school matters. We shall expect in consequence a much greater attention to health, sanitation, and the improvement of the school grounds and premises. Another change which will be advantageous to many districts,—one man one vote at school meetings—It has happened that uninterested non-residents have attended school meetings for the sole purpose of curtailing improvements in the interest of lower taxes. This cannot now be done.

Opportunity Schools.

Notable achievements of recent years have been Opportunity Schools—seven in number, started in the City of Saint John. I understand that Fredericton and Moncton are also contemplating similar departments. Teachers will appreciate the relief furnished by such schools, as these pupils are present throughout our schools. I will not enlarge on this subject as there are to be two papers pertaining to it given at the present institute.

The Saint John School Board has been authorized to expend a sum not exceeding Five Thousand Dollars for free kindergarten work in that City.

There has also been authorized the payment of board, or provision for conveyance, of isolated pupils living in unorganized districts. There has been advantage already taken of these privileges and we are assisting in paying the board or a few pupils.

There has also been authorization to City School Boards to supplement pensions given by the Government to teachers of long service, and of great merit. This has been done in several cases, and is a greatly appreciated enactment by more than one deserving teacher. I trust the example of these School Boards will be contagious.

Free Text Books.

The forward step of providing certain free text books to pupils of the lower grades has been taken and has gone into operation, since our last

meeting, and I hope in time this plan may be followed until at least all common schools may be supplied. In any free School System providing free education the tools of the same should be free, if we are to be consistent. Text book requirements vary and progress with the changing conditions of the times. In the "Educational Research Bulletin" of the University of Ohio for May, there were some investigations and comparisons of text-books of the past and present, showing very striking differences in the point of view then and now. It would take too long to discuss these here. Texts have been free in the United States almost from the beginning of free schools. In Canada, there is no Province that does not make some provision for them. In British Columbia, I think, nearly all texts are free.

There are some who object to free texts on the ground that there is a sense of pride in ownership. One new text is given to each pupil.

The man on the street usually views with alarm changes in texts, if he has to pay for them, and there is an opinion often expressed that we change too frequently, while others justly complain that many of our texts are obsolete. We should always seek to have "the latest tool of the trade." This is true of all occupations and industries and everywhere you may see practically worn machinery discarded for later and improved implements. In the United States there is a regulation in many places, that texts shall not be changed until after three years' use.

The old Royal Readers were in use here about 30 years, and despite the fact that we never had better, I think it will be agreed that after such a lapse of time in use, they would become stale, and not in touch with more modern sentiment and advancement of knowledge.

Changes Are Needed.

We have more than one text now, in use for nearly a quarter of a century. If these texts had been free they would have been changed long ago.

While cheapness is an important consideration in the selection of a text, it is not the most important, we should be unhampered in the selection of the best, wherever produced. Text books made to order have usually been disastrous failures. The best ones have been the work of genius, and written without any definite design as to where they will be used.

The Red Cross.

There is no agency in the world today, regardless of nationality, that has as great an influence in cementing the friendship of all peoples by the exercise of sympathy and service as the Red Cross.

Wherever there is war, famine, disaster or disease, there the Red Cross is upon the ground, rendering service. We have become educated to the necessity of helping this Society and never question its objects.

When some time ago, the Junior Red Cross asked a half hour of your school time per week from each teacher who would be willing to give it, a good many of us looked askance at the proposition, not that we doubted its objects, but we feared we could not spare the time. There are 8,000,000 members of Junior Red Cross in nearly every corner of the world, and the number is rapidly increasing.

We have a number in this Province, which is growing and which I hope will continue to grow. If I ever had doubts as to the work and influence of Junior Red Cross, a better knowledge of its work and influence has convinced me that it is one of the finest agencies in our schools today for good citizenship. Wherever there is Junior Red Cross in a school, there are better behaved pupils in the school, on the street and in the homes. Their motto is Service and their contributions are voluntary. I wish it were possible to put before you a statement of the crippled or diseased children, it has been instrumental in curing or relieving. Its work along these lines has become so well known, that several Societies have offered to assist it with necessary funds.

Much Work to Do.

With each teacher's Provincial Grant in February last was sent a circular, asking the teacher to report any cases of crippled or diseased children within their knowledge. Out of 2400 teachers only 900 replied and these replies disclosed a great amount of work for the Society to do, and which it is undertaking with the assistance of others. This work may not seem important to some of us, but how important it is to these suffering children, I hope Miss Lawson will have the opportunity to tell us, during this Institute.

It may be necessary to take this census from time to time and I hope all teachers will respond, as it will be at least reassuring to know you have taken cognizance of the matter and that there are no needy cases within your knowledge. There is much latent artistic ability among our pupils, and Junior Red Cross is one of the few avenues through which, at present, it is able to find expression.

(Continued on Page 6.)

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