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THE CANADIAN SCHOOL AN INCREASING SOCIAL FACTOR

In an earlier bulletin of the Education Branch of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics it was shown that schools and universities in Canada claim about 3.5 p.c. of the national expenditure, and this may be considered as an indication of their importance in the economic life of the country. Their weight as a social factor can not be as readily represented statistically, but the following considerations are of interest in this connection.

No other occupational activity in the life of the country claims the daily attention of as many persons. Each year sees one-fourth of the population of Canada appearing in the classroom either as pupil or teacher. There are about twice as many school children as there are farmers, and as many as there are men in all other occupations combined.

For almost ten years of his life the Canadian child of today goes to school. If his actual attendance in months is considered, counting ten months as a school year, he receives eight and a half years of schooling, or about half as much again as his parents.

It is true, of course, that during the years he is at school many more of his waking hours are spent out of school than in, and that in these hours, as also during the six or seven years before he starts to school, his home is likely to be the dominant factor in his life. As a formative influence the school can hardly be expected to approach the weight of the home. But in relation to other influences its weight is heavy. If from the time that he starts to school he spends an hour and a half weekly in church, at the theatre, at the athletic stadium, reading the daily press, or listening to the radio, the young Canadian of today will have to live to the age of ninety years in order to spend as much time with any one of these as he spends in school. Moreover, the time in school, like the time in his parental home, is concentrated in his earlier and more impressionable years.

Length of Schooling in 1911, 1921 and 1931 Compared.

Each decennial census of the Dominion ascertains the number of children who have attended school during that school year and the number of months attended by each. From this information it is possible to calculate the amount of schooling being received by the average child, and such calculations are shown for each province, on the accompanying tables for 1911, 1921 and 1931.

Table I. shows the average number of years schooling that would be received by each child on the basis of attendance records of census years, counting ten months of attendance equal to a year. Table II shows the number of years of each child's life during which he would spend some time in school, under attendance conditions of the census years.

Conditions of 1931 would produce an attendance for the average child throughout Canada, of 8.55 years,--almost exactly one year more than 1921, and two years more than in 1911. Since one of the years represents ten months of attendance it is probably about the length of time required to cover a school grade, and the average number of grades covered by a child in 1931 would accordingly be about 8.5 as compared with 6.5 in 1911, except that there was probably more retardation in the earlier year.

In order to obtain this amount of schooling, it was about ten years (9.89) from the time that the child of 1931 started to school until he left, as compared with about eight years (7.96) for the child of 1911.

As well as an absolute change of two years in the amount of schooling, there has been a considerable relative shifting of positions among the provinces. In pre-war years schooling was shortest in the western provinces, especially Saskatchewan and Alberta, the two in process of most rapid settlement. Among the older provinces there was not a great deal of difference, all showing between 6.7 and 7.0 years, except New Brunswick. In the twenty years following 1911 the Western Provinces overtook the others in average length of schooling, in spite of the fact that the older provinces went continually ahead. In Alberta this meant increasing the average schooling by nearly four years. Quebec had the smallest increase, about one year, with the result that whereas its schooling was one of the longest in 1911, the others all exceeded it in 1931. It and New Brunswick were the only provinces at the later date not exceeding eight years. The Prairie Provinces and the other two Maritime Provinces at the same date show between eight and nine years; Ontario and British Columbia, over nine years. (See Table I.)

The time spent at school under the age of seven has shown very little change in twenty years, being less than half a year on the average, in both 1911 and 1931. Attendance between the ages of 7 and 14, the regular years of elementary schooling, has increased from 5.34 to 6.49 years. Much the greatest relative increase has been among pupils of 15 years and older, viz., from .82 to 1.58 years.

Girls' Schooling vs. Boys' Schooling

If tables like those attached were made for boys and girls separately, the girls would be seen to receive more schooling than boys, about half a year more at the present time. This has been a characteristic of Canadian education in the 20th century. For a still longer time there has been less illiteracy among native born Canadian women than men,--a situation that is quite the opposite to that existing among the people who have come to Canada from foreign countries.

A phenomenon that it is of interest to view in the light of this relationship between Canadian men and women in the matter of schooling, is the fact that mothers appear to take more concern for the education of their children than do fathers. Is this partly because they have more schooling themselves? The census shows that the children of widows and deserted wives, up to the age of fifteen at least, receive more schooling than children who are left with only their father. More wonder still, the school attendance of the widow's children, up to this age, is as good as or a little better than that of children who have both parents living.

Table I.- Average Number of Years^{1/} Schooling Received by Each Child, under School Attendance Conditions of 1911, 1921 and 1931.

	At age 5-6	At age 7-14	At age 15-17	At age 18-24	Total
	<u>1 9 3 1</u>				
CANADA .....	.48	6.49	1.23	.35	8.55
Prince Edward Island ....	.43	6.34	1.05	.30	8.12
Nova Scotia .....	.62	6.47	1.30	.34	8.73
New Brunswick .....	.35	6.18	1.11	.32	7.96
Quebec .....	.44	6.22	.88	.24	7.78
Ontario .....	.63	6.72	1.42	.43	9.20
Manitoba .....	.42	6.58	1.32	.36	8.68
Saskatchewan .....	.33	6.49	1.23	.34	8.39
Alberta .....	.32	6.60	1.48	.42	8.82
British Columbia .....	.49	6.67	1.58	.41	9.15
	<u>1 9 2 1</u>				
CANADA .....	.47	5.98	.88	.25	7.58
Prince Edward Island ....	.34	5.64	.91	.24	7.13
Nova Scotia .....	.44	5.86	.99	.26	7.55
New Brunswick .....	.30	5.34	.84	.20	6.68
Quebec .....	.56	5.98	.69	.20	7.43
Ontario .....	.57	6.34	.93	.31	8.15
Manitoba .....	.37	6.11	.99	.25	7.72
Saskatchewan .....	.32	5.62	.82	.19	6.95
Alberta .....	.28	5.82	1.11	.25	7.46
British Columbia .....	.39	6.41	1.23	.33	8.36
	<u>1 9 1 1</u>				
CANADA .....	.42	5.34	.67	.15	6.58
Prince Edward Island ....	.32	5.47	.79	.13	6.71
Nova Scotia .....	.44	5.41	.80	.18	6.83
New Brunswick .....	.29	5.20	.81	.16	6.46
Quebec .....	.53	5.59	.52	.13	6.77
Ontario .....	.46	5.69	.66	.19	7.00
Manitoba .....	.29	4.92	.78	.16	6.15
Saskatchewan .....	.26	4.06	.56	.08	4.96
Alberta .....	.22	3.90	.68	.12	4.92
British Columbia26	5.11	.81	.14	6.32

1/ One year of schooling represents ten months of actual attendance.

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Table II.- Average Number of Years of Each Child's Life during which some Time was Spent in School under School Attendance Conditions of 1911, 1921 and 1931.

	At age 5-6	At age 7-14	At age 15-17	At age 18-24	Total
<u>1931</u>					
CANADA .....	.64	7.44	1.41	.40	9.89
Prince Edward Island .....	.64	7.47	1.25	.35	9.71
Nova Scotia .....	.82	7.49	1.51	.40	10.22
New Brunswick .....	.49	7.23	1.30	.37	9.39
Quebec .....	.57	7.13	1.01	.27	8.98
Ontario .....	.83	7.65	1.62	.50	10.60
Manitoba .....	.61	7.53	1.52	.41	10.07
Saskatchewan .....	.50	7.55	1.43	.40	9.88
Alberta .....	.43	7.58	1.69	.48	10.18
British Columbia .....	.62	7.59	1.81	.48	10.50
<u>1921</u>					
CANADA .....	.67	7.12	1.04	.30	9.13
Prince Edward Island .....	.57	7.06	1.18	.29	9.10
Nova Scotia .....	.63	7.00	1.18	.31	9.12
New Brunswick .....	.45	6.66	1.05	.24	8.40
Quebec .....	.73	6.92	.79	.23	8.67
Ontario .....	.79	7.34	1.09	.37	9.59
Manitoba .....	.56	7.23	1.18	.30	9.27
Saskatchewan .....	.54	7.12	1.04	.23	8.93
Alberta .....	.45	7.22	1.37	.30	9.34
British Columbia .....	.53	7.39	1.44	.39	9.75
<u>1911</u>					
CANADA .....	.58	6.38	.81	.19	7.96
Prince Edward Island .....	.50	6.77	1.02	.17	8.46
Nova Scotia .....	.64	6.64	1.00	.22	8.50
New Brunswick .....	.42	6.42	1.02	.21	8.07
Quebec .....	.68	6.46	.60	.15	7.89
Ontario .....	.65	6.75	.87	.23	8.50
Manitoba .....	.42	5.99	.98	.21	7.60
Saskatchewan40	5.36	.75	.11	6.62
Alberta33	5.05	.91	.17	6.46
British Columbia37	6.04	.97	.17	7.55

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