

eastern Nova Scotia are concerned. If the matter was left to each Board of Trustees as formerly, or to the Commissioners, the great inconvenience complained of would be remedied. But if for the sake of uniformity and hygienic reasons it is thought proper not to make any change, I would beg leave to suggest that the scholastic year be made to commence at the close of the summer vacation. The proper time, approved by universal practice, for holding the examination of a school is just before the vacation, a custom which is now being observed in several parts of the Province in our Common Schools. It is awkward it seems to me, besides being opposed to the general interest of our schools, to have the examination just in the middle of the term.

You will permit me here to express my entire concurrence in the views put forth last year in your Report on the much advocated compulsory attendance law. I was some years ago in favor of such a clause in the Act, but having given the subject more thought and acquired more practicable experience in the working of our schools, my views have undergone a change, and I now believe as you do that such a stringent enactment, repulsive to many, would not or could not be carried out, and would therefore remain a dead letter. It is all very well to talk about compulsory education, but its advisability and practicability are other things. The machinery for the enforcement of a law of that nature would have to be very simple indeed, if it did not jar somewhere and lead to much annoyance and confusion, retarding rather than advancing the end in view, the progress of popular education. With the undeniably great progress made by our Free Schools during the past eleven years before us, I think we ought to be well satisfied; and, the past being a guarantee of the future, we have reason to feel confident of continued success. The law, as it is, has so far been worked satisfactorily and harmoniously, and it would be wise, it appears to me, not to introduce any disturbing elements at this stage of our progress and leave well alone. Apart from the trouble it would, in all probability, engender in its operation; there are not a few who believe it is treading on dangerous ground to advocate that the State shall enforce attendance in schools which are entirely under her control. In my humble opinion, if an enactment of that kind were passed, our State schools would no more be free; for I take it that by free schools is meant not only that they are free or open to all without distinction, high or low, rich or poor, white, black or brown; but that one is free also to send or not to send his child to them. The moment there is compulsion in the matter, the liberty of the individual parent ceases, and what then becomes of one of the great principles of our constitution—liberty of conscience?

All which is respectfully submitted,

R. BENOIT.

A. S. HUNT, A. M.,
Superintendent of Education.

VICTORIA COUNTY.

KENNETH MCKENZIE, Inspector.

SIR,—

In endeavoring to present the results of my observations during the past year, as to the state of Public Education in this County, I beg to submit the following as my third annual report:—

The number of school sections in the County of Victoria is now 78, being 1 in addition to that indicated in former reports,—the boundaries of which