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CANADIAN EDUCATION IN THE 1950'S

In an address to the Canadian College of Teachers at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on August 13, 1959, Dr. E.F. Sheffield, Research officer, Canadian Universities Foundation, said that the most striking fact about elementary and secondary education in the 1950's was the increase in the number of pupils.

Dr. Sheffield said in part:

"When heads are counted in the autumn of this year there will be about 1.33 million more pupils in school than there were in the year 1950-51, an increase of 53 per cent to a new high of nearly four million. In the elementary grades almost the whole of the increase is accounted for by growth in the child population: the percentage of children attending these schools has risen only slightly because for some years it had been near the maximum. At the secondary level, however, there have been not only more children of high school age but attendance of that group will have risen from 51 to 59 per cent.

"One near-casualty of the pressure of numbers has been the public school kindergarten. In many communities it has been discontinued to make room for pupils in the grades. Some of the demand for pre-school facilities has been met by private or co-operative nursery schools and kindergartens, but many four and five-year-olds have had to do without school experience until old enough to enter the first grade.

"It is interesting to note that in spite of the expressions of dissatisfaction with the

public schools which have been heard throughout the land, the percentage increase in private school enrolment has been considerably less than that of public school enrolment. Private schools enrol less than 4 per cent of all children of elementary and secondary school age.

TEACHERS

"In the year 1950-51 there were approximately 93,000 teachers in public elementary and secondary schools. To staff the schools this fall we may expect to have about 147,000, or 57 per cent more than ten years ago. (You will note that the percentage increase in the teaching body is greater than that of pupil enrolment. I suspect that this results largely from the disproportionate increase in numbers at the secondary level where the ratio of pupils to teachers is lower than in the elementary grades.)

"Unhappily, although there have been teachers in most classrooms during these years (except in some rural centres), an alarming number of them have been inadequately qualified. A study made for the Canadian Conference on Education revealed that in 1955-56 one teacher in five had less than what most educationists would consider to be minimum professional preparation: for elementary grades, at least high school graduation at the junior matriculation level plus one full year of teacher training; for secondary grades, at least a university degree, plus one full year

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