

HALIFAX COUNTY

HINKLE CONDON, Inspector.

SIR,—

My Report on the Public Schools of Halifax County for the year ended Oct. 31st, 1877, is hereby respectfully submitted for your consideration.

In 1864 the enthusiasm and untiring exertions of Dr. Dawson, the lamented Dr. Forrester and other excellent men, worthy of all praise and grateful remembrance, had begun to bear fruit in an aroused public sentiment, and it was felt that if Nova Scotia was not forever to lag behind it was necessary to take a fresh start in educational matters. This conviction led to the inauguration of our present Free School System. It required tact, executive ability, and the most untiring labor to organize sections and settle their boundaries, elect Trustees, appoint Commissioners, provide teachers of the several grades and arrange for the annual and semi-annual meetings, in which so much of the minutiae of our school business must be transacted. The greatest difficulty of all, however, was to firmly withstand the formidable opposition and prejudice which still existed to a great extent throughout the Province. We have been so far successful that we have now 1770 sections, some 2000 schools, and upwards of 100,000 children in attendance during some portion of the year. Whilst, however, we may justly congratulate ourselves on what has already been done, the contemplation of that which still remains to be accomplished, if we would build wisely on the foundation so well laid, and carry on the work in such a manner as shall commend itself to our successors, should nerve us to more strenuous exertions, and a still more intelligent reading of the signs of the times, so that we may go on continually improving our system, and adapting it more perfectly to the requirements of our day, which is emphatically one of transition.

You will find in the statistical tables the leading facts in regard to the number of schools, the enrollment and attendance of scholars, the number of teachers of the various Grades employed, and the receipts and expenditure for school purposes.

Sections.—Our commissioners have again refused to multiply Sections; and if teachers are to receive a fair remuneration for their services; if good school accommodation is to be secured—in a word, if our schools are to be maintained with efficiency—then the formation of small and poor sections must be opposed with inflexible determination. Nor is the argument, so often urged, that children are unable to attend school on account of the distance a valid one, for we find that in Sweden “7000 children travel daily over two miles to school, and 2000 over four miles; yet the attendance is regular, and ninety-seven per cent. of the children are receiving school instruction.” In addition to this, the experience of many of our teachers proves conclusively that there are no scholars more regular and punctual in their attendance than those who come from a distance.

As an example of what can be accomplished by large sections, the following case is in point:—The Commissioners for the Eastern District of this County were petitioned, on several occasions, to divide Murphy's Cove Section into two, the petitioners maintaining that children could not walk three miles to school. The Board refused compliance, on the ground that if the Section remained undivided, one good school could be supported the year round; where-