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THE CANADIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

(Prepared by F.E. Whitworth, Director, Education Division
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This report has been prepared for the general reader outside Canada who wishes to know something about Canadian education -- how it is organized, administered and financed, the types of school it makes available, and who attends them. The reader is assumed to know the basic geography of the country, which occupies the northern half of North America (except for Alaska) and supports a population of more than 19 million, clustered mainly along the 3,500-mile border with the United States but pushing its outposts north in increasing number as more of the oil and mineral wealth of the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions is disclosed. It is also assumed that the reader knows that Canada is a federation of ten provinces and an independent member of the Commonwealth.

In Canada, executive authority is vested in the Queen and her representatives the Governor General and the lieutenant-governors of the provinces. By the British North America Act of 1867, legislative responsibility was vested in the federal and provincial legislatures.

When the provincial leaders sat round the conference tables in Charlottetown and Quebec just over 100 years ago to consider the desirability of forming a federation, they maintained firmly that the education of all Canadians except Indians, Eskimos and other persons in the territories, as well as a few special populations, should remain the business of the provincial legislatures. It is true that in 1867 education consisted, for the most part, of instruction in schools run by the community, with some help and direction from the province. In other words, education was still mainly a matter of local concern.

Since 1867, the role of education in Canada has changed. Today, its chief purpose is considered to be that of contributing to the good of a changing society and to its economic advance, at the same time ensuring the development of the individual member of that society to his maximum capacity. Greater change can be expected as Canada progresses further into