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# REPORT OF THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION of PROTESTANT TEACHERS OF QUEBEC

Mr. President, Members of Convention,

At the last convention of this Association you saw fit to appoint a committee whose duty was to carry on propaganda looking to the enactment of a law of Compulsory School Attendance in this province. The following members of convention were named to act on that committee: I. O. Vincent (Convener), Rev. E. I. Rexford (former Sec'y of the Dept. of Public Inst.), C. A. Adams (Pres.), Miss Amy Norris (Ex-pres.), Sinclair Laird (Dean of the School for Teachers), Miss I. E. Brittain (Vice-pres.), Mrs. E. A. Irwin (Representative on the Protestant Committee), J. W. McOnat (Inspector), I. Gammell, W. C. R. Anderson (Sec'y of Committee, 2044 Esplanade Ave., Montreal).

Owing to the pressure of other duties Inspector McOnat resigned and Inspector Rothney was named by the President to take his place. The committee regret that owing to the continued indisposition of Mr. Sinclair Laird they were in large measure deprived of his valuable advice and assistance.

At the first meeting of the committee it was decided that as a preliminary to any systematic propagandist activity, it was necessary to study (1) the school attendance situation in our province and (2) contemporary School Attendance Laws of the sister provinces, (3) to gather information that would result in the members of the committee becoming somewhat familiar with the child labour situation here and with child labour legislation here and elsewhere.

That we may more fully appreciate the significance of the educational situation in this province, it seems desirable to preface the report with a brief statement of the origin and prevalence of school attendance laws among the countries of the civilized world, followed by a summary of recent educational activities that indicate the movement elsewhere towards a higher standard of education.

## THE ORIGIN AND PREVALENCE OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

It is a mistaken idea to suppose that Prussia was the first modern state to use compulsion to bring its children to school. It was in 1713 that Frederick William I issued orders that were later embodied in a law. But 80 years before, while the predecessor of the present Kaiser was only the Elector of the Mark of Brandenburg, the colony of Massachusetts, through its General Court, passed an

enactment to "redress the evil caused by the great neglect of many parents and masters in training up their children in learning and labour". Near the close of the 17th century the Estates of Navarre in France passed a similar enactment, 20 years at least before Prussia did so.

At the outbreak of the war every state in Europe had acknowledged the principle of an attendance enactment of some sort, except Russia. Even Turkey as long ago as 1869 adopted the principle. The Kingdoms that once formed part of Turkey have all declared primary education compulsory, and so has Finland and even the Duchy of Luxemburg. Several states of Europe have extended the principle to secondary or continuation schools. The last country to adopt it was Belgium in May 1914.

In the British Empire all Australian and New Zealand, all of the Union of South Africa and many of the smaller colonies have adopted it. All the provinces of our own Dominion have adopted it except Quebec. The only other self-governing part of the British Empire that has not adopted such a law is Newfoundland. The Minister of Education for Newfoundland admits in a letter to your Committee the need for such a law for that colony and wishes your Committee all success. And in his last report (1917) the chief Inspector of Catholic Schools for Newfoundland urges the adoption of such a law at least for the cities. Will Quebec not follow that lead?

In the United States of America not a single State is without some sort of attendance law; six states added such clauses to their education laws within the last eight years.

In Asia, Japan has an attendance law; while in South America several of the Latin republics have adopted such laws as a part of their educational systems. At the present time the matter is one of much importance and is being seriously considered in Chili, Peru, Argentina and Uruguay.

The important thing to note regarding all these countries with their different laws for enforcing attendance, is that there is absolutely no case on record of a country that has rescinded such an enactment. Some of these laws are not as well enforced as they might be; but where they have been enforced properly and for some considerable time, we invariably find an insistent demand for the extension of the period of compulsion to the