

were recognized when in 1908 the Dominion Government began the issue of continuous annual agricultural estimates of field crops and live stock. The system then adopted was that which had been followed for about fifty years by the United States Department of Agriculture, and consisted in the estimation during intercensal years by crop correspondents of plus or minus percentage differences in areas of field crops and numbers of farm live stock, as compared with the previous year. The imperfection of this system—by which errors become cumulative—has long been recognized by English agricultural statisticians, whilst in the United States, too, efforts to introduce improvement by change or modification of system have not been wanting. A ten years' application of the system to Canada has abundantly demonstrated, especially in the case of crops small relatively, but important in the aggregate, the untrustworthiness of data so collected, and it is matter for congratulation that the Dominion Government authorities have broken away from the system before it became too deeply a part of national practice to make rupture easy or even feasible.

The new system, partially applied for the first time in 1917 in co-operation with the Provincial Governments, consists in the annual collection from individual farmers of the areas sown to field crops and of the numbers of farm live stock, the totals for each province being estimated upon the basis of the actual returns received. At present, after a trial of two years in four provinces and of one year in five provinces, the percentage of actual returns varies from twenty to over fifty; but there is reason to believe that by persistence of effort these proportions will gradually increase. The returns are collected through the agency of the rural school teachers and children, who show praiseworthy intelligence and zeal. The employment of the rural schools in this way has much to recommend it. The children are being trained to appreciate the importance of annual statistics of agriculture, and will when they become farmers themselves more readily complete and return the annual schedules as required. The work is also a present annual school exercise of considerable educational value. From the national point of view, it is to be noted that the improved method involves a fresh start every year, so that errors may be corrected instead of multiplied, whilst the co-operation between the Dominion Government and the provincial Governments not only brings to the former the benefit of greater knowledge of local conditions, but also ensures the publication of identical results by both Government authorities, thus eliminating a mutual conflict of Government authority which in the past has been most embarrass-