

intendent. Provision was also made for the re-division of the province into school sections, the examination and uniform classification of teachers, the regular inspection of schools; and the Executive Council was constituted a Council of Public Instruction, in order that the whole subject of public education might be brought under the immediate and constant supervision and control of the Legislature.

While this law contained much that was needed to elevate the condition of education, it did not, however, create a permanent and equitable basis of support. The school rate, being wholly local, varied extremely in different school sections. This, with the large expenditure entailed upon the majority of sections, in order to secure proper school-houses and furniture, alarmed the people in many parts of the province, and caused the entire suspension, for a time, of school operations in many sections which had previously supported schools. During the legislative session of 1865, numerous petitions on the subject were presented. A few asked that the old law be restored; but the great majority earnestly sought the re-adjustment of the mode of support, so as to equalize, as far as possible, the school rate. Not a single petition, we believe, was adverse to the principle of free schools. The Legislature amended the law by equalizing the rates. This was done by providing that a portion of the amount required from the people should be raised by a general rate over each county. The provincial grant was increased to \$90,000; and the balance required for salaries beyond that received from these two funds, was to be raised by subscription. Experience quickly demonstrated to the people that the mode of support was yet imperfect. Many would not subscribe so much as a farthing towards supplementing the general funds, and trustees found themselves unable to command the means necessary to carry on the schools. The most intelligent portions of the country murmured, not that a county assessment had been established, but that the power of local assessment had not been preserved to the majority of the rate-payers of each section. The conviction that a proper system of free schools necessitated the universal application of the principle of assessment, grew apace.

In 1866, petitions, numerous signed, again awaited the meeting of the Legislature. Nearly all of these petitions asked that the amount of the county assessment be increased to a sum equal to the provincial grant; that voluntary subscription be abolished, as being incompatible with a system of free schools, and that assessment be ordained as the mode of raising all local funds in connexion with public schools. After careful consideration the prayer of these petitions was granted. A county rate of thirty cents for each inhabitant; a provincial grant to be disbursed in fixed amounts to the several classes of teachers; and the right of a majority of rate-payers to assess the property of the residents of the section for all other necessary funds for school purposes, were established as the most equitable, safe, and efficient mode of supporting education. These amendments come into operation during the ensuing month.

A striking evidence of the superiority of a system of free schools over every other system, as an instrument adapted to effect the general diffusion of intelligence, is furnished by the attendance upon the schools of Nova Scotia since the introduction of that system. We have already referred to the alarm which, in many portions of the province, was experienced on the introduction of the law in October 1864, and the consequent closing of a large number of schools.—Many persons very naturally anticipated a large decrease in the aggregate attendance on the schools; but the contrary proved to be the fact. The excess over the previous year was, for the first term, 1,886, and for the second term, 6,225. The number of children receiving instruction has continued to increase, as is seen by the following returns for the term ended April 30 :—

COUNTY.	No. of Free Public Schools.				No. Pupils attending School.			
	1865	1866	Increase.	Decrease.	1865	1866	Increase.	Decrease.
Cape Breton.....	43	61	18	.....	1659	2591	932	.....
Victoria.....	33	39	6	.....	1222	1560	338	.....
Inverness.....	48	62	14	.....	1880	2891	1011	.....
Richmond.....	28	33	5	.....	1222	1371	149	.....
Guysboro'.....	18	22	4	.....	640	1078	438	.....
Antigonish.....	39	51	12	.....	1594	2046	452	.....
Pictou.....	68	91	23	.....	3652	4756	1104	.....
Cumberland.....	28	72	44	.....	2083	2914	831	.....
Colchester.....	51	67	16	.....	3148	3506	358	.....
Halifax.....	62	99	37	.....	4550	6090	1540	.....
Hants.....	44	60	6	.....	2062	2477	415	.....
Kings.....	45	49	4	.....	2040	2534	494	.....
Annapolis.....	32	52	20	.....	1790	2433	643	.....
Digby.....	25	34	9	.....	1388	1975	587	.....
Yarmouth.....	18	36	18	.....	2023	1920	.....	103
Shelburne.....	20	24	4	.....	1004	1314	310	.....
Queens.....	21	13	.....	8	990	712	.....	278
Lunenburg.....	44	51	7	.....	2204	2416	212	.....
Net increase.....	667	906	247	8	35151	44584	9814	381
			239	.....			9443	.....

This is an increase, in the aggregate, of 9,433 over the corresponding period of last year, and of 11,319 over the same period of the previous year. This rapid and enormous increase is unparalleled in our school history, and is chiefly due to the adoption of county assessment and the freedom of school privileges.

It will be seen that much has already been accomplished towards realizing what the educational committee of the House of Assembly so earnestly desired in 1851. For sixteen years this subject has, to a greater or less degree, occupied the public mind, while the last two years of that period have witnessed decisive action on the part of the Legislature. As a result of this action, there has finally been secured an adequate system of supporting schools, and a supervision and inspection of the same. The standard of teachers' qualifications has been raised, and rendered, as far as possible, uniform throughout the province; a system of school registration, returns, and distribution of moneys, has been nearly perfected; county academies and superior schools have been established; a very large number of comfortable, and even elegant school houses have already been erected, while many old houses have been enlarged and repaired; improved school furniture has been procured, and playgrounds purchased and improved; maps, globes, and apparatus have been extensively introduced into the schools, and provision made for the permanent and cheap supply of a uniform series of school books. A series of reading books, a system of penmanship, a map of British America, and an elementary arithmetic, have been provided expressly for our schools, and in their influence for improvement it may appear that these are not among the least beneficial of the results which have been mentioned.

On the 15th day of October next, the people of Nova Scotia, for the first time in the history of the province, will be able to command a sufficient and equitable support for the proper conduct of a system of public schools. No subject of equal importance ever received from our Legislature a tardier justice; but the experience of the recent past induces us to hope that a matter of such vital importance to all will hereafter receive the attention which it demands. It now only remains for the people, one and all, heartily to combine their efforts in order that the inestimable blessings of a good common-school education may everywhere be enjoyed.—*Nova Scotia Journal of Education.*