

APPOINTMENT OF CITY SCHOOL BOARDS IN N. B.

The authors of the N.B. Free Public School System were wise in their generation, not only in the manner of appointing trustees for cities and towns, but in the duties and powers conferred upon them.

Objection has been taken that trustees should be directly elected by the people, and that they should not have any voice in determining the amounts of money to be appropriated.

This plan has been followed in the United States, with most disastrous results to the schools. Politics in its worst form has dominated the schools until the citizens in most progressive cities have abandoned this method in disgust and have returned to small school boards appointed by the Mayor for a term of years instead of being elected annually. The office of local superintendent is no longer elective. He is appointed by the Board for a fixed term, and is held responsible for appointments to the staff of teachers and for the administration of his department.

Surely we in this province do not wish to begin where others have ended in failure.

There are indications here of the town councils desiring to usurp or take over the prerogatives of School Boards in cities. If this be permitted, it will be the worse for the progress of education.

It is most desirable from many standpoints that school trustees and councils should be in harmony and that courtesy and sympathy should be extended from each body to the other, but it must be remembered that the School Boards of the past have averaged to say the least, in standing, progressiveness, and stake in the community as highly as members of the councils. They have, moreover, from their experience at the Board, a much better knowledge of the needs of the school service, than members of councils. They may not be as directly responsible to the people, yet they are responsible through the Legislature and city government.

Various suggestions have been made as to making up some of the time lost in the schools by the almost universal prevalence of influenza. Among them may be mentioned "Giving only one week's vacation at Christmas," "The abolition of the Easter recess," "Extending the school year into July." Some of these schemes are to be carried out in a number of places.

It is doubtful if very much, if anything will be gained by so doing, and it is sure much discontent will be excited. There is a very strong appetite for holidays on the part of many residents of our cities and towns. The people in the country districts regard their length as rather a joke and many of them expend much

ingenuity upon their contracts with teachers in order to avoid paying for any time regarded as holidays.

Yet country teachers think they are entitled to as many holidays as those in the cities.

Many inquiries have been made as to the liability of N.B. School Boards to teachers for time lost because of influenza. Teachers are referred to section 122 School Manual.

METHOD IN TEACHING

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If we were asked to say what word in educational literature, or at least in discussions relating to teaching, had been most abused, I would say it was the word "method." This abuse is seen not only in the unreasonable emphasis that is sometimes placed upon it, but also in the absurd way in which it is often applied or rather misapplied. For example, writers on education have not hesitate to apply it to the most common expedients and devices, and even tricks of the school-room. Most teachers here present to-day have heard of the "letter" method, the "word" method, and the "sentence" method of teaching reading; the "oral" method and the "written" method of teaching spelling; the "oral" method and the "book" method of teaching elementary science, and I know not how much more besides. In the literature of teaching, particularly the minor literature, the word is repeated *ad nauseam*, and, if possible, still more frequently in lectures and class instruction. And then the stress that the advocates of these different methods place on their little devices. As though men were never taught anything, or could be taught anything, except according to their particular prescriptions! Is it any wonder then that many sensible teachers weary of "methods" have turned their faces away from method, as they hope, forever.

But a moment's reflection must convince us that this subject cannot be got rid of in such an easy fashion. Any teacher of sense will see this the very moment he takes one real look into the heart of the matter. Method in general has been defined by M. Compayre "as the order that we voluntarily introduce into our thoughts, our acts, and our undertakings." In strict propriety of language, however, the term method has reference to the particular mode in which the subject matter of education is developed and presented to the mind. It is merely the outward form, while instruction is the substance. The question of method, then, is not one of secondary importance which the teacher may neglect or not according to his pleasure; and in all questions of method, the first point to be settled is what is the real end of education, the second, how can this end be most effectually secured? Method solves