

tendance is not the average attendance for the year but only for such part of it as the school has been open to the date of the Inspector's visit. This may occur at any time from February to the beginning of June.

It is well known that many children in attendance during the winter months drop out before the term closes, there being no means of preventing them. This happens particularly in May and June. The Inspector would visit most of the schools before that date and so their average attendance would not thus be lowered by this fact. Again, in the rural communities in all provinces many children start school for the first time in the spring; whereas these children by an accurate method of computation could only make a possible of perhaps 20 p.c. or 30 p.c. of attendance, in Quebec they are completely ignored in all cases where the Inspector has visited the school previous to their entrance. Of course such a method must show up to the advantage of the school or province that uses it, as compared with the others that use the figures for the whole year. Moreover, there is no mention made in the report to show that these figures for attendance are not for the whole year. This again shows the need of definition, or, better still, of standardized statistics. This method is haphazard and inexact; at best it is a very insecure foundation on which to claim an advantage over the other provinces.

We see then that the Quebec method, while absolutely unique, so far as your Committee knows, as a method of computing attendance, gives Quebec three advantages over the methods prevailing elsewhere. (1) Quebec does not suffer any reduction in average attendance by pupils dropping out of school after the Inspector's visit. (2) Quebec does not suffer any reduction by reason of the short attendance of pupils who begin after this same visit, which may be as early as February. (3) Quebec suffers no deduction by the short term of some of its schools, as Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta suffer.

Not merely has our manner of working out the average attendance these three advantages, which are considerable, but it is not a true percent of attendance for the year.

Surely the Manitoba method gives a more complete representation of the attendance situation if we are to use the percent as the one figure to show the condition of attendance; besides, from our method it is impossible to calculate the number of days per year each child on the average attends school. About 30 years ago the reports did show how many months the schools were open; this gave some indication, though of a somewhat too general nature, as to the amount of schooling the children were get-

ting per year. Your Committee does not understand why this valuable information is no longer given.

There is a fourth advantage which we enjoy over three of the provinces, namely Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The school report for these provinces is for the calendar year, while ours is for the natural school year from one summer holiday to the next. The disadvantage which these provinces suffer from this custom in reporting statistics is as follows: much the largest proportion of children beginning school start in the fall. In Quebec this is at the beginning of the school year and hence it is possible for these children to make 100 per cent of attendance if they attend regularly throughout the year. But in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan the opening of the schools in the fall is well past the middle of the statistical school year and hence such pupils can only make about 40% of attendance even though present every day from the opening of school in September till the Christmas holidays. What brings down the percent of average attendance of individual pupils for a school year similarly affects the annual provincial average attendance.

Is it not therefore evident that the percent of attendance is a most unreliable and indeed misleading item from which to get a true conception of the relative status of school attendance in the several provinces? That being so, we must base our judgment of attendance conditions on other data.

The present school census is not accurate and is a census in part only: the figures for the cities are based on an estimate.

A most vital consideration in determining the need of legislative measures for improving school attendance, is the question of the number of school age children unenrolled from year to year. Unfortunately there are no accurate statistics of recent date available. One would expect to get this information from the school census, for we have such a census. But this census is not taken at all in Montreal, Quebec, Sherbrooke, Hull and elsewhere—cities whose aggregate population is nearly half that of the whole province. Your Committee regrets to be obliged to report that no mention is made in the annual reports of the Department of Public Instruction of the omission of proper census figures from these cities; figures are given which were made up in the Department itself (X). Surely this is not the degree of accuracy and candour the

(X) Your Committee has recently been informed from the Department of Public Instruction that "the percentage between the enrolment and the census for the districts where the census is taken is the one applied in the case of cities where the census is not taken."