

A large majority of Canadian children enter school for the first time at six, with lesser numbers entering at five and seven. From six to 13, more than 95 per cent of each age-group is enrolled, after which the percentage drops off rather rapidly to college age and above. The average child receives about 8.2 years of schooling.

Illiteracy has not been a major problem in Canada for many years. In 1951, about 2 per cent of the population, ten years of age and over, reported never having gone to school and a somewhat larger group reported attending only from one to four years. A small percentage of these would not have benefited from going to school, but most of the others had been reared in the backwoods or the barren north, or had immigrated to Canada and had had no opportunity for schooling. There is still a small number of children who receive no schooling and many others who could benefit from more.

There has been a shortage of teachers ever since an increased birth-rate resulted in a wave of beginners entering our schools, followed by a surge of pupils swarming up the educational ladder. However, the first wave has now reached the teacher-training colleges and should provide the necessary staff. On the other hand there will be many young and inexperienced teachers on the job and greater efforts are necessary to provide "in-service" training and more supervision. The percentage of male teachers is remaining fairly constant, which is satisfactory considering that the number of married women is increasing rapidly.

More young people are remaining in school to complete high-school, and a greater number are continuing through university. The greatest change is in rural areas, and is in part owing to the erection of an increased number of consolidated country high-schools with bus-service provided. Although the old one-room school-houses are gradually going out of use, it will probably be many years before they disappear completely from the Canadian countryside.

Interest in vocational and technical training is growing as the exploration of outer space, the advance of automation and other scientific and technological developments place a high premium on skilled workers and decrease the demand for those who lack special skills. Accelerated exploitation of natural resources, the rapid expansion of industry and the use of electronic computers have created a chronic shortage of engineers and technicians. Greater emphasis will therefore be placed during the next few years on the teaching of mathematics and science. Meanwhile, training in the trades and other forms of preparation for the workaday world will be available to young people of high-school age who are neither academically nor technically inclined.

The fast growth of Canada's population, mainly by natural increase but also by immigration, is over-taxing the capacity of the nation's schools. Among the problems created by this state of affairs are those of raising funds to meet capital and maintenance costs, building new schools and obtaining enough teachers for them -- at the very time when, in an expanding economy, business, industry, the armed forces, the civilian professions and many institutions are competing for the available money and manpower. Because of the size of Canada and the harshness of its climate, the problem of transportation for rural pupils will become more acute as greater numbers of central schools are established. Other educational problems include the nature of the curriculum, the length of time to be spent in school, unit organization and, in general, the adjustment of today's schools to the demands made on them. Above all is the problem of turning out more graduates, who will be better educated than ever before.