

NOVA-SCOTIA.
PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT.

[From the Novascotian.]

Education—Common Schools.

As much anxiety prevails throughout the Country, in consequence of the approaching expiration of the School Act—and the uncertainty as to measures likely to be adopted for the support of a system of general education, we hasten to lay before our readers the following Report, made to the House on Saturday, by a Committee composed of a member from each County; and which will form the basis of the acts and appropriations of this Session:—

The Committee appointed to examine the various Petitions regarding Schools have agreed for the present, to confine their attention to the Act passed in 1832, for the encouragement of Common and combined Grammar Schools, leaving Academic and other institutions of learning to form the subject matter of their final report.

The Committee are unanimous in recommending the said Act to be continued for the space of two years longer, not because they entirely approve of the principle, on which it is constructed, viz: The voluntary subscription of the inhabitants within the different School Districts, but because they reckon that the Province is not yet ripe to assume the burden of maintaining a system of elementary education, by an equitable assessment on the population, according to their ability. One of the Petitions submitted to their notice, and subscribed by thirty-six signatures from Middle Musquodobit, strongly argues on the insufficiency of the existing Act, to accomplish the effects which are expected from it; and calls on the Legislature to take the matter into their serious and deliberate consideration, and to enact that hereafter the common Schools shall be supported by a just and equal assessment on the means and property of every individual. The declaration of these sentiments, thus publicly expressed, cannot fail to be regarded as the dawning of a better and more liberal tone of thinking, which must extend and propagate among all classes, when the superior advantages of this plan are contrasted with the dubious and uncertain means which have heretofore been adopted for the support of common education; and a hope is entertained that during the next two years the liberal minded within the several Districts will exert themselves to place their Schools on such a footing; and in order to facilitate this end, a slight modification in the fifth clause of the Act has been suggested:—"That when a majority in place of two thirds (as at present) of the Freeholders and Inhabitants shall agree at the Public Meeting, to be held in the manner therein mentioned, to raise the several sums required, to be provided for the maintenance of the Teacher, by an equal rate and assessment upon each person according to his ability, then the amount shall be levied in the same manner by which the poor are now provided for."

In recommending the mode of assessment as the surest basis of education, the Committee have looked back to the several Acts which have been passed by the Legislature, and which have been suffered to expire either from the want of disposable funds, from a difference of opinion between the two Branches of the Government, or from a change of plan in the structure of the machinery, or in the amount of compensation. No teacher could ever regard his appointment as of a fixed and permanent character; and this very uncertainty has deterred from that profession the only class of men who were calculated to fulfill its duties. The master of a School, with a precarious and incompetent income, has none of the motives to prepare himself by an adequate training with the various knowledge which he ought to possess; and the Trustees on the other hand, with the slender remuneration they can offer, have been obliged often to hire persons, who to themselves were objectionable, either in a moral or intellectual point of view.

The committee have not been inattentive to the systems which other countries have established for diffusing the blessings of education, and they have met with examples which fully justify, from their tried success, the principle of assessment. The North American States have both their Common and Grammar Schools supported by this method, and it is found in perfect accordance with the feelings of that active and intelligent people. The immense benefits extended to the whole community, of having permanent institutions to train the rising generation in the elementary branches of reading, writing and arithmetic, orthography, a hundred fold, the petty inconvenience of a small portion of every man's means being taken and appropriated to so deserving a purpose; and the plan is now so thoroughly wrought into the very frame of society, as to incur the risk of ever being abandoned. Scotland also is another memorable instance of a happy government, since the era of the reformation

ABSTRACT OF RETURNS
Received from the Commissioners of Schools for the year 1835.

COUNTY OR DISTRICT.	No of Schools			No. of Scholars.	No. of Do. free.	Amount raised by people.		Amount paid by Provincial Treasury.		REMARKS.	
	Combined	Common	Total No			£	s. d.	£	s. d.		
Halifax District	1	18	19	820	23	1099	0 0	225	0 0	The particulars for which	
Pictou do	2	59	61	2029		406	0 0	406	0 0	blanks are left do not ap-	
Colchester do	3	45	48	1177	156	1522	0 0	423	0 0	pear from returns received.	
Hants County	1	25	26	903	70	619	15 0	368	6 0		
Kings do	2	29	31	1026	5	895	0 0	426	0 0	In some instances, returns	
Annapolis, Eastern Dist.	2	45	47	1461	213	1235	0 0	247	10 0	for half of the year only	
do Western do	1	34	35	690	67	778	0 0	230	0 0	have been received; in such	
Yarmouth & Argyle do	1	53	54	1623	307	1281	0 0	227	7 7	cases it has been assumed	
Shelburne County	1	9	10	275	33	266	0 0	157	1 0	that the amount raised by	
Liverpool do	3	23	26	620	53	560	10 0	352	8 1	the people in the period	
Lunenburg do	3	41	44	1236	0	1070	0 0	432	10 0	for which returns are wan-	
Cumberland do	8	30	32	972	1085	0 0	325	19 0	ting, has equalled the am-		
Sydney, Upper District				85	783	95	785	0 0	230	0 0	ount raised for the six
do Lower do				17	340	60	311	4 0	156	0 0	months for which returns
Cape Breton, N. E. Dist.	1	17	18	654	32	951	1 0	205	0 0	have been received.	
do N. W. do	1			43		93	3 8	158	6 8	Returns of common	
do S. do	1	18	19	627				98	0 0	schools not received.	
Total,	26	248	274	15,292	1,153	12,453	6 2	4,687	2 4		

in supporting Schools by legal and compulsory rates; and the experience now of three centuries has only tended to strengthen and fortify all the arguments, which were at first urged at the founding of parochial Schools, by their sanguine and zealous supporters: and to this national institution, resisted at the beginning with a plausible valence and energy, has been ascribed the rapid progress of the people, notwithstanding the natural poverty and barrenness of the country, in all the arts which minister to civilization. In the very lowest ranks rarely can a person be found incapable of reading, of signing his name, or of working the common rules of figures; and this early mental cultivation, however small and limited, is universally beloved to contribute greatly to the moral habits of the nation, and to their worldly success in every quarter of the globe to which they emigrate.

The plan of these Schools is easily sketched and detailed. In every parish one of them must of necessity be founded; and, besides the house or apartment for teaching, a suitable dwelling under the same roof, or a distinct dwelling, must be provided for the master. No part of his income is derived from the public funds, but the freeholders in every parish are bound to furnish him with an annual sum called the salary, and to keep the School and its dwelling in ordinary repair. The salary varies considerably, according to the size and wealth of the parish, being in some as low as £20, and in others rising above this by various gradations, according as Landholders are desirous of attracting men of the first talents to the instruction of their youth. But the salary alone is the sum which the law compels the inhabitants to provide, and the other emoluments growing out of fees and wages, are paid by the parents who send their children thither for instruction. The Parish then merely gives a partial contribution to the support of the Teacher, to enable him to accept a lower rate of wages from all without distinction, and also to extend his care gratis to such children and orphans as could not otherwise be educated. The freeholders, many of whom never had families, or have families grown up and settled, are not burdened with the whole cost of maintaining these schools, but only with a small portion of it, so as to lower the rate of tuition; and to make learning more accessible to the middle and poorer classes; and accordingly whenever their own sons and daughters are placed under the superintendance of the Master, they have to pay him the customary fees exacted from the rest of the Community. Whenever a vacancy occurs in a parochial School, Candidates, by public advertisement, are invited to offer themselves, and a day of public examination is fixed, when such as appear undergo a comparative scrutiny, touching their qualifications and proficiency; and the teacher not qualified is forthwith installed into the situation, not liable to be dismissed afterwards, except for misconduct.

For half a century past none have been allowed to enter into competition, who are not capable of teaching the higher branches; and a thorough knowledge of the Latin tongue; with a moderate share of the Greek, is regarded as indispensable. In towns or villages which rise within the bounds of a Parish, either from the increase of manufactures or the natural growth of population, Schools of all kinds, and many of them, taught by females, spring up, and which all are left to their own fate, having no support other than the fees of tuition. With this the Law in no shape interferes, but confines its requisitions to one

public School, with a Master of suitable attainments in some central part of the Parish.

Though the Committee refrain from recommending our Common Schools to be meddled after this fashion; for, as yet, we neither have the Teachers nor are able to provide for them on the same liberal scale, yet several of them are of opinion that something approaching to it may be grafted on our present system. They would recommend the continuance of the last Legislative grant in its amount for the general purposes of education—but to this, whenever the majority of the freeholders and rateable inhabitants shall so determine, should be added, a further sum to be raised, and levied by assessment upon all classes indiscriminately, married and unmarried, old, and middle aged; which two sums united form the Salary of the Teacher; and the Trustees, when it is so determined by the majority of the inhabitants, who assemble at such public meeting, shall fix the rate of wages payable by such Parents as take the benefit of the School, and should also have the power of admitting orphans and poor children without fees. If we follow the Scotch plan, the assessment will be confined within the limits of the School District, but if we adopt the American, it will comprehend a whole Township; and by one general assessment will provide for all the Schools situated within its boundaries.

To give effect to the compulsory rate, the act for the encouragement of Schools, should either be perpetual or be for a long term of years; that the Provincial aid held out may be depended upon both by the Teachers and also by the rateable inhabitants; and this permanence of the grant will both be a stimulus and security for the founding of Schools on this stable and permanent basis. Such a system is not open to the many objections which have been urged against the system of compulsory assessment. Wealthy Freeholders who have no children themselves, are only called upon for a moderate contribution to assist the cause of general education; while the teaching of the poor, which may be justly regarded as an exercise of the purest charity, will give to this unfortunate class the best means of earning for themselves an honest livelihood, and of neither dishonouring Society by their crimes, nor burdening it with the effects of their recklessness and improvident habits. Men of easy circumstances should bear in mind that in thus contributing their quota they are multiplying the chances of being forward those rare talents, which occasionally appear among the humbler orders, and which in many instances, when thus receiving the advantage of early culture, have given a powerful impulse to those arts and sciences from which all men derive an immediate and personal gratification.

To the Petition from New Caledonia in Granville, which asked the aid of the Legislature for building a house of different apartments for a male and female School, the Committee were inclined to reply, that the large sum required for common schools absorbs all that the Provincial liberality can afford, and that the act requires the erection of a building as the first requisite for claiming any support.

Three Petitions were also taken under consideration presented by Schoolmasters, who complain of their being deprived of a participation in the public money in the last division made by the Board of Commissioners. Two of them came from the County of Halifax, the third from Cornwallis, and all of them would have