

Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY
THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFOR-
MATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

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**ARE ALL CHILDREN
ALIKE
?**

**Does Ford know
how much material is wasted in
his factory ?**

Does he know why ?

**Does he try to reduce waste to
the vanishing point ?**

**Do you know how much child-life
waste there is in your city ?**

Do you know why ?

**Do you know what the waste costs
your city in**

**sorrow
pain
poverty
disease
and
dollars ?**

**What are the Citizens of Toronto going to do
about the problem of the
City's Feeble-Minded and
Normal Backward Children ?**

The 1913 Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Schools in a leading Ontario city contains the following remarkable passage:

"Public schools in large cities are very costly and the rate-payers have a right to receive the fullest possible information concerning them. It often surprises me to note how willingly city people will pay taxes to support schools, and how little interest they take in the spending of the money for which they are taxed. It would seem that the average man believes without reservation in public schools and that he has an abiding faith in the authorities which manage them. This faith may or may not be justified in any particular place and at any particular time, but nothing can be more certain than that any great improvements in our schools must come from an awakened interest on the part of the public.

"Improvement in education in a democratic country can come only to a very limited extent from legislatures, superintendents, school boards, inspectors, and teachers. We must, to secure real improvement, have the co-operation of the ordinary men and women whose children attend the schools. A progressive legislature or a superintendent with foresight may seem at times to make great advances, but in the end they can move no faster and no farther than public opinion allows them to move."

No thinking persons will deny that the public schools of Ontario have performed and are performing a service of tremendous value to the Province in training boys and girls from Canadian and foreign homes to take their places as thinking independent citizens of a

country whose well-being depends upon the intelligence and moral fibre not of a ruling class but of the people as a whole. The school is the essential part of the huge melting pot into which are thrown the mighty influx of aliens which, if improperly treated, may destroy the body politic, but if treated intelligently and sympathetically may bring to us elements of culture and modes of thought which are greatly needed to enrich our Canadian civilization.

The menace of the normal alien is, however, negligible when compared with the terrible menace of the sub-normal and feeble-minded child of Canadian as well as of foreign parentage. The foreigner can be assimilated. The feeble-minded child can never be assimilated, but must always remain a stranger in his home land, whose genius, institutions and national life he cannot by any tour de force be made to understand.

If feeble-minded persons did not marry, or if, marrying, their unions were unproductive, the menace would be slight, but as they do marry and are extremely prolific, and as feeble-minded parents can have no other than feeble-minded offspring, the menace is not only real but cumulative.

There are from 1,500 to 2,500 feeble-minded folk of all ages in Toronto, and from 300 to 500 are of public school age. In fact there are from 250 to 300 in the public schools alone. What a drain these little-understood and therefore badly-treated little brothers and sisters—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—are on the community one can hardly conceive. And the misunderstanding and ignorant abuse, and for the most part the drain upon our sympathies and purses, are quite unnecessary.

No citizen of Toronto should fail to read Dr. Helen MacMurchy's "Catechism About the Feeble-Minded." Lest anyone should fail to find a copy, we quote it in full:

- "1. WHY SHOULD I READ THIS CATECHISM? Because I am a Canadian and because I pay taxes.
- "2. WHO ARE THE FEEBLE-MINDED? Those whose minds are the minds of children, no matter how old they may be. They

cannot learn properly at school, their minds are always undeveloped, they cannot control themselves, cannot manage their own affairs, cannot earn their living unless continually directed and supervised. They form a large proportion of the unemployed, the unemployable, the dependents, the 'ne'er-do-weels,' the paupers, the prostitutes, the criminals.

- "3. WHERE ARE THE FEEBLE-MINDED? In our Public Schools, Separate Schools, Industrial Schools, Homes, Refuges, Orphanages, Hospitals, Houses of Industry, Industrial Farms and all other charitable institutions—in our Gaols, Prisons, Prison Farms and Penitentiaries—and at large in the community.
- "4. What is the number of the feeble-minded in Canada? About two or three per 1,000 population.
- "5. Is the number of the feeble-minded in Canada increasing, and if so, why? Yes. Because feeble-minded persons have many children, and because there are some feeble-minded immigrants.
- "6. Could the number of feeble-minded persons in Canada be prevented from increasing? Yes. Permanent care of the feeble-minded from an early age would prevent the natural increase, and a stricter medical examination of immigrants in the country from which they come as well as at the port of entry would prevent increase by immigration.
- "7. WHO SUPPORTS THE FEEBLE-MINDED? You do. You pay School Taxes and Municipal Taxes. You subscribe to charitable institutions. You belong to some benevolent society. You help with relief work. You pay the cost of the administration of justice, the upkeep of penal institutions and the salaries of school, sanitary, municipal, police and all other officers and officials. It is a big bill.
- "8. CAN THE FEEBLE-MINDED EARN THEIR OWN LIVING? Many of them can almost or quite earn their own living, if trained, and if cared for and supervised in a suitable institution, the only place where they are ever really happy. Almost all of them can be taught to do something useful.

"9. What is the cause of feeble-mindedness? Heredity is the cause in about eighty per cent. or more of all cases. Four out of very five feeble-minded persons had one or more feeble-minded parents, or grandparents, or both. In one out of five cases the cause is accidental or unknown as yet.

"10. CAN FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS BE CURED? No.

"11. CAN FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS BE TRAINED, IMPROVED AND MADE USEFUL AND HAPPY?
Yes.

"12. WHY SHOULD WE CARE FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED IN CANADA? Because we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Because it costs less to care for them than to neglect them. Because if we don't they will leave behind them so many feeble-minded children that it will be bad for Canada. One feeble-minded man and one feeble-minded woman, born in Ontario and married in Ontario, have had ten children, all feeble-minded.

"13. WHO WILL HELP ME TO CARE FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED?
Your School Trustee, who has the direction of the Teacher, the School Nurse and the School Medical Inspector.
Your Warden, Reeve, and Council.
Your Mayor and Alderman.
Your Member of the Legislative Assembly.
Your fellow-citizens, your friends, your neighbors, your family.
Yourself.

"14. WHAT SHOULD WE DO FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED, BOTH FOR THEIR SAKE AND FOR THE SAKE OF THE COUNTRY?

Have Medical Inspection of schools so that we may know where our feeble-minded children are. (Toronto, of course, has a Medical Inspection Department.)

Have Auxilliary classes for all children who are backward, so as to get them forward, if possible, and to find out why they are

backward. If it is found that the reason of retardation is feeble-mindedness, then they need special training.

Have Training Schools and Homes for feeble-minded children.

Have Industrial Farm Colonies where adult feeble-minded persons may earn their living and be safe and happy and be prevented from being a source of evil and expense in the community."

In 1913, according to the latest official report of the Toronto Board of Education, there were enrolled in one inspectional district of this city 183 children who were in the grades of which they were then members for at least the fourth time. If the ratio holds for the whole city there were 1,151 such children in the schools of Toronto. If these children who were wasting their time and the taxpayers' money in this way were feeble-minded children, what business had they in the public schools for normal children? Not only was their mental condition being made continuously more hopeless, but the time and attention needed for children capable of normal development were being stolen from them. Not only was little but harm being done to the one sub-normal child, but the hundred normal children were being seriously handicapped.

If these 1,151 were normal children, by what right are conditions maintained which compel a normal child to go over from four to eight times the same dry bones of any term in the course of study?

It is probably true that some of these children are in special classes, but until all slow normal children are receiving separate expert attention, and until all sub-normal children have been provided with the type of instruction which authorities unanimously urge, the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto cannot clear themselves from the odium of slowly strangling the mental development of thousands of normal children and of failing to develop to the highest point possible hundreds of defective children. The two problems are intimately related.

The normal backward child, who is usually an extremely valuable asset to the state, cannot be fully realized upon until the defective

child is segregated. There can be no reasonable doubt that a great saving in human resources could be effected without increased expenditure and guaranteeing to the city and province an addition to their assets equivalent to an income of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

In 1913 there were in the schools of one Toronto inspectorial district 10,458 children. The official report indicates that 14 of these children were in a special class. Of the 10,458 children, 7,209 were working at the term's work for the first time, 2,397 for the second time, 669 for the third time, 128 for the fourth time, 43 for the fifth time, 4 for the sixth time, 4 for the seventh time, and 4 for the eighth time. It is reasonable to suppose that the last 12 children were in the special class for children and that they were all defectives. These, however, form but a small part of the 183 children who were repeating their work for from the fourth to the eighth time. Moreover, there is reason to believe that normal and sub-normal children may be found in the same special classes in some cases. What progress has been made since 1913 in the establishment of special classes for backward children in contradistinction to defective children is not yet known, as the 1914 report of the Board of Education has not yet been issued. That much remains to be done, however, is very evident.

The usual deadening influence on the pupil of repeating even one term's work, especially in primary classes, is well known to most teachers. The result is not simply loss of time but often permanent impairment of efficiency. As the 1913 report of the Board of Education well says of children in overcrowded primary classes:

"About 50 per cent. remain in the class another term, in many cases to mark time for months. Here is where the retardation begins, and discouragement, which, later, to some bring delinquency, and to all insufficient education."

In the inspectorate above mentioned among the 7,209 children doing the work of their grades for the first time some would do the work in a shorter than normal time, some in the normal time, and some would fail of promotion. Among the 3,249 repeaters of all degrees of backwardness some few perhaps would make rapid progress,

some would make normal progress, and some would again make slow progress during 1913. Any who made rapid progress would be offset for calculation purposes by those who again failed of promotion. Assuming, therefore, that all these repeaters this time would make good and be promoted at the end of their terms, at the time of promotion it would have taken them 7,612 terms to complete 3,249 terms' work.

Reckoning a school term—defined as the normal time necessary to complete a grade—as being on the average equal to three quarters of a school year, these repeating children consumed 5,709 school years in doing 2,437 school years' work. If these conditions were average for the city as a whole, children repeating grades consumed 35,921 school years in doing 15,333 years' work. Even assuming that under the best conditions which could be obtained half this wastage was unavoidable—a statement which no one would be justified in making—the net waste would be in the district 1,636 school years, or a money waste of \$44,172, and in the city as a whole 10,299 school years, or a money waste of \$278,073.

Just as in a business an unnecessary loss is not compensated for by a profit in another direction, so the unnecessary loss of one child's time cannot be counterbalanced by the rapid progress of another child. Any preventable loss can be regarded only as a dead loss—a subtraction from the total product. It is true that not all slow progress can be eliminated, but experience in Toronto as well as elsewhere has shown that administrative methods may do much to reduce the waste.* Among 29 cities the net loss per child on account of slow progress of normal children varied from nothing to almost \$10.

If anyone says that the course of study is so divided that the average pupil cannot do the term's work in a term's time, the obvious answer is, "then, why not fit the course of study to the child instead of the child to the course of study?"

The 1913 report of the Board of Education contains the following passage:

*Page 40, 41. Report of Board of Education.

"After a careful observation of school activities in this district I am led to conclude that among the more immediate and potent causes of retardation are: the overcrowded condition of the primary classes; the inelasticity of our school programme of study; the system of promotion; and the carelessness of parents."

It is probably costing the City of Toronto from \$250,000 to \$500,000 a year in impaired productiveness or actual expenditure, or both, to allow these conditions to operate. It is idle to say that the Province is responsible and that nothing can be done with parents. Parents can be educated as to their responsibility, and Provincial authorities are not only amenable to reason but anxious to assist a forward movement. This is not a Prussian city whose schools are dominated by a Prussian Kultur-minister. This is a British city, of British parents, and in a British Province with British responsible government.

The waste of material resources is serious enough, but the waste of child life involved in a laissez-faire attitude toward the problem of the feeble-minded and the problem of backward normal children in the schools would be simply appalling.

That the educational authorities in grappling with these problems are meeting many obstacles is evident. As the opening quotation indicates, they need the assistance of every citizen in arriving at a permanent solution.

Have you heard of the Toronto Commission for the Conservation of Child-life and Efficiency?

There are about 200,000
members, but the great
majority of the members
don't know it.

*Are you
a member in good
standing*

?