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ISSUED BY THE
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SCHOOL STORY No. 2

SOME FACTS ABOUT OUR SCHOOLS IN 1914

as told by our educational leaders

*From the Board of Education Report for 1914
Issued October, 1915*

**FOLLOWING OUR BRIEF RE-
VIEW OF THE 1913 REPORT
SEE SCHOOL STORY No. 1**

Have you secured a copy from Mr. Wilkinson,
Secretary-Treasurer of the
Board of Education?

Public education is Toronto's most important community undertaking. The money necessary for its support is given most ungrudgingly.

Everyone may have at least some small share in making our schools even more serviceable to our children than they are at present.

One way each of us can help the Board of Education to get 100% of community service for its expenditure is to study the difficulties which face it.

The 1913 reports of the district inspectors clearly point out that parents can do much to stop school waste.

Measurements of school results are not meant to award praise or blame, but to discover the nature and size of problems to be met in order that they may be effectually solved. Even if all the "slow progress" and "dropping out" is the result of poorly prepared children coming in from other districts, our problem is not diminished but rather increased. The question is not "How shall we clear our skirts?" but "How shall we overcome the difficulty?"

In 1914

about 75,000 boys and girls were being prepared for living by our public and high schools

at an annual maintenance cost of

\$2,942,363

—(City Treasurer's Report)

and involving an expenditure on Building Account of

\$2,573,178

—(Board of Education Report)

The official story of this most intensely interesting process of human conservation and development is told in the 1914 Report of the Board of Education

(Published October 1915).

Can you afford not to read it?

SLOW PROGRESS THROUGH THE GRADES OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (RETARDATION)

The amount, causes, incidence or remedies for slow progress are not mentioned* in the 1914 Report of the Board of Education, except in about one-half page from the report of the chief dental officer, which reads in part as follows:

"In 1913, 189,840 school children in New York failed in promotion. The cost of re-teaching this group for one term at a semi-annual per capita of \$19.30, amounts to \$3,675,302.40. Non-promotion is largely caused by loss due to absence through illness, or to lowered student efficiency, the result of physical defects. . . . While it is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy just how much of this retardation is due to physical defect, it is a generally accepted fact that the greater part of it is so due. Defective teeth constitute the great bulk of physical defects."

Queries

How many children failed of promotion in Toronto?
At what annual cost?

This problem of human conservation is one which we cannot ignore. We do not know what progress has been made since last year in solving it, and cannot find out,—hence we reprint the following extracts from the 1913 Report:

*The 1914 Report devotes 10 lines to statistics of backward classes. These enrolled 142 pupils. (See page 15.)

From Inspection District No. 4:

Amount of Slow Progress

"Of the 10,458 pupils in the various grades, 2,957, or over 28%, are above the average ages for the various grades, while 3,199, or over 30%, have been more than one term in a grade. Of the 3,199 repeaters, 852 have spent from three to eight terms in a grade." (A "term" here means one year each for five grades and six months each for the other three.)

Comment

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 (not annual).

Causes of Slow Progress

"After a careful observation of school activities in this district I am led to conclude that among the more immediate and potent causes of this 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."

From Another Inspection District:

Amount of Backwardness

"Now, taking the number of children in the classes who are from 1 to 3 years behind the standard ages (see page 47), the percentage varies from 20 to over 50% of backward pupils. . . ."

Causes of Backwardness

"These (pupils) are backward from several causes. They are not all, nor are they to any very considerable number, mentally defective children. Some are backward through long and serious illness. Some through maladies due to scarlet fever or other disease, and some are foreign. But even these totalled do not explain the large number of 'repeaters.' The cause must be sought elsewhere.

"Consider the fact that the large majority enter school at 5 or 6 years of age and remain about a year in the Kindergarten. Consider, also, that from the time they enter the Kindergarten at 5 years till they enter Senior First Book Class at 8½ years, they have been 3½ years in school. Is the progress commensurate with the time consumed? Have children been given a love for school work? Are the difficulties of the Second and Third Classes to be charged to the First Book and Kindergarten grades? Are we expecting too much from the younger children? Is it in the interests of Education to keep children at desk work in the classroom as long between 5 and 8 years as in the higher grades? It would seem questionable to continue practices which show so little for the time involved."

From Inspection District No. Two: The Existence of Slow Progress

"The retardation of pupils in the grades is a very present problem."

Causes of Slow Progress

"Irregular attendance, overcrowding of the class-room, under-feeding, improper feeding, and the passive attention of city children to formal studies, owing to the many passing, dissipating interests of artificial life, are evident causes of a condition more and more calling for redress. But there is a common cause often overlooked, the tendency of most teachers to concentrate attention upon the

bright children of the class, adapting the lessons to contribute to the progress of those who readily reflect credit, and ignoring largely the slow and unkindled children. This procedure should be reversed; the teacher should concentrate on the fringe of the class, those who are behind, and who see not the way, ignoring to a large extent the clever and the normal, who will find the way almost alone. Herein lies a better solution of this problem than is to be found in ungraded classes. To this end the teacher of a junior grade, especially, should use wisely the half-hour period from 3.30 to 4 p.m. for individual work with backward children: more, the hour from 11 to 12 a.m. should be given to the children who are behind, the bright ones being sent off home or to the playgrounds."

All this information was contained in the reports of the district inspectors for 1913. Their inclusion was a new departure, and one of the most hopeful ones made recently by the department. This year the reports of the district inspectors for 1914 have been suppressed.

Comment

The official reasons given for their suppression seem to be:

1. There is no by-law or regulation to compel their publication.
2. It would cost money to publish them.

In view of the nature of two-thirds of the 1914 Report, the Bureau would raise the question whether these reasons are valid. Please read the 1914 Report for yourself and decide whether all of the material actually included is more valuable than material of the sort quoted above from the 1913 Report. As to the contents of the 1914 reports of the district inspectors we have no information.

Queries

- Is it not reasonable to suppose that men considered expert enough to supervise our schools should have special knowledge which would be of value to those who pay the bills?
- If inspectors are treated as if their opinions are of no value to the public, is it reasonable to suppose that they will again sit up nights in the preparation of their reports?

Were the 1914 reports of the district inspectors suppressed because they were inaccurate, or because they told parents and taxpayers more than was good for them?

Is the remedy for alleged inaccurate information the correction of the information, or its total suppression?

Can you change a situation by refusing to look at it?

Steps in Advance

1. Continuous individual records for children are to be tried out in one school of each district. Why not in all? Such cards have been in use elsewhere ten or twelve years.
2. We are informed that a by-law is to be passed by the Board of Education requiring the printing of the district inspectors' annual reports in future.

Query

How are the taxpayers to learn the contents of the reports of the district inspectors for 1914?

DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL BEFORE COMPLETING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL COURSE

This is known technically as "elimination." It is not treated in the 1914 Report. Next to slow progress through the grades, premature dropping out is the most pressing school problem in the conservation of child life. Taken together, these phenomena cost the country perhaps millions of dollars annually, besides limiting the happiness and productiveness of tens of thousands of children.

We cannot ignore the man-power and money loss due to children dropping out of school before completing what is regarded as the minimum schooling for Canadian citizens. We therefore reproduce the following table from the 1913 Report:

This table gives the number of pupils of 14 years of age who withdrew from the Public Schools during 1913, without finishing the Public School course, and the grade they were in at the time of withdrawal:

SCHOOL	Jr. 1	Sr. 1	Jr. 2	Sr. 2	Jr. 3	Sr. 3	Jr. 4	Sr. 4	Total
Allan	2		2			3		1	8
Bedford Park.....					1	1		1	3
Church Street						2			2
Cottingham Street					1	2	11		14
Davisville		1		2		4	4	4	15
Deer Park								3	3
Dufferin.....					3	1	13	15	32
Duke Street				3	8	6			17
Eglinton				1		1	4	1	7
George Street	2		2		2		6		12
Hester How	1		2	5					8
Hospital									
Island									
Jesse Ketchum			1		6	9	14	31	61
John Fisher					2				2
Lee									
Park				3	8	15	13	15	54
Rose Avenue				2	5	1	5	10	23
Rosedale									
Sackville Street			1	10	5	9	17		42
Victoria Street			6	1	4	2	25		38
Wellesley					5	7	1	3	16
Winchester Street					1	10	4	2	17
York Street	3				2	6			11
Total.....	8	1	14	27	56	77	117	84	385

Queries

If there was a wastage of 385 children through dropping out in one district, what was the wastage for the city?

Why are we not told?

Comment

Individual records for children going back seven or eight years are not necessary to discover—

How many children made slower than normal progress last year;

How many children left school without receiving a minimum education last year;

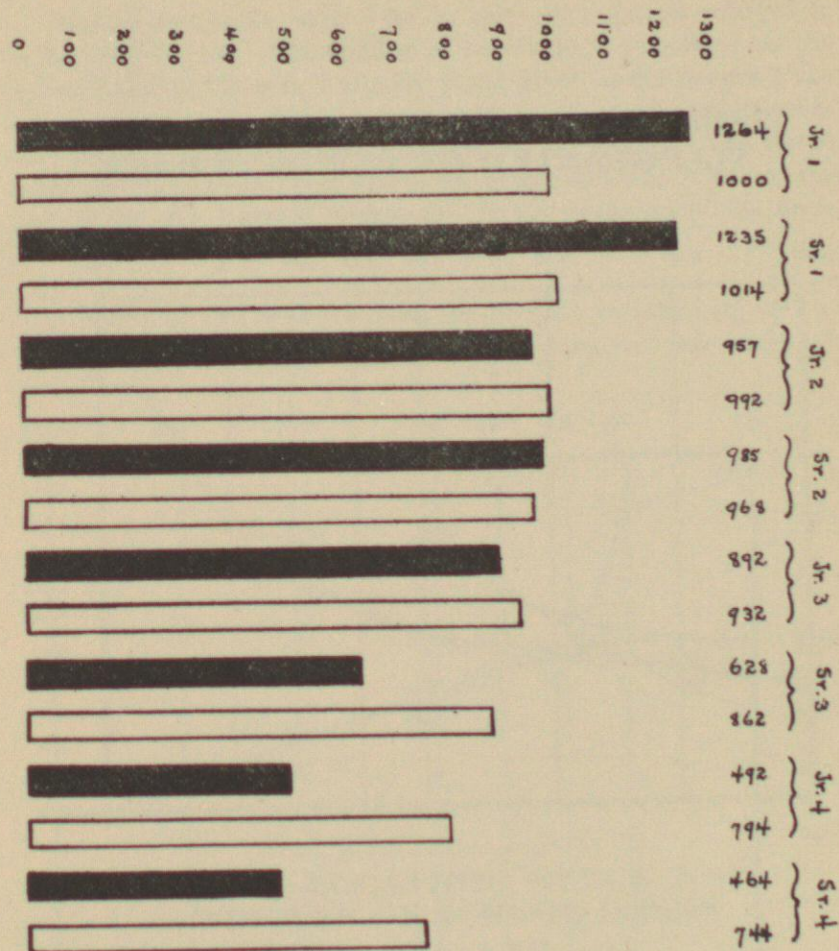
Approximately, how much of the wastage was preventable last year;

Approximately, the causes of slow progress and premature dropping out of school, for the whole city, last year.

Amount of Wastage on Account of Slow Progress and Dropping out per 1000 Children Beginning School

Owing to the absence of continuous record cards it is not possible either to measure or locate separately the wastage due to these two factors. The best which can be done is to measure the results of both by a cross-section of the school membership, analyzing this by the ideal cross-section which would appear if there were no slow progress and no dropping out, but allowing to the full the results caused by rapid increase in population and by death.

In the chart below the white rectangles indicate (for a certain restricted school area in Toronto) what the membership of the various grades would be per 1,000 beginners in the first grade, if there were no educational wastage, but allowing for the effects of death and increase in population. The black rectangles represent the actual membership in the various grades in the same district per 1,000 beginners. The chart indicates that there were approximately 264 children too many in the Junior First and 221 too many in the Senior First, owing to failures in promotion. This amounts to about 20% of the membership of these grades, and is the net wastage only. The chart also shows that, measured by the standard of 100% efficiency, there are 40 children too few in the Junior Third, 134 in the Senior Third, 302 in the Junior Fourth, and 280 in the Senior Fourth. The total wastage from this source is 280, which represents a wastage of 37.6% from dropping out. These estimates are a minimum, as the district chosen was evidently in especially good condition, and as the extreme effects of death and increase in population were assumed.



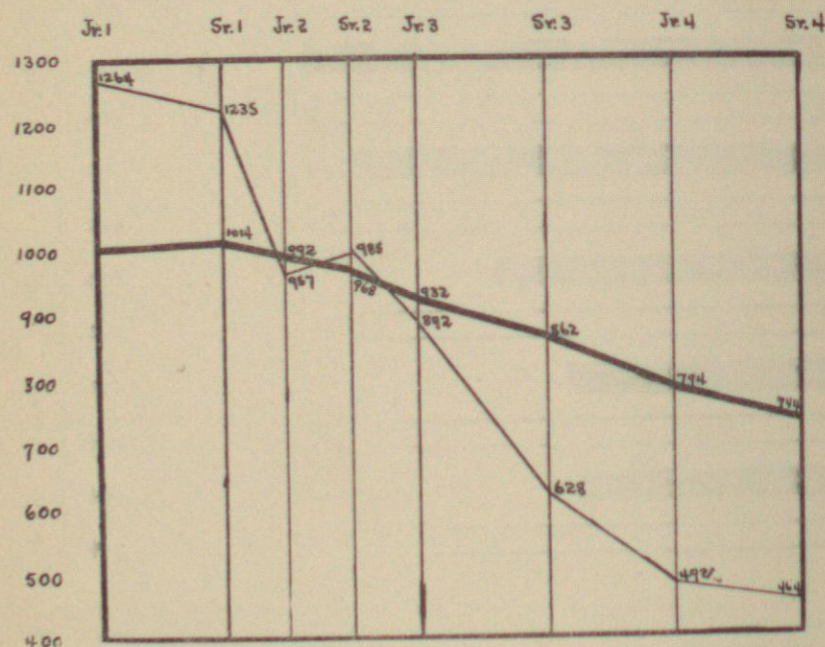
The black rectangles represent the present membership of each grade. The rectangles in outline represent the membership as it should be for each grade, if there were no slow progress and no dropping out. Note the disparity at each end of the scale.

Queries

- How much of this wastage was preventable, and how much was due to defects in the boys and girls?
- What was the actual money loss?
- What was the actual man-power loss?

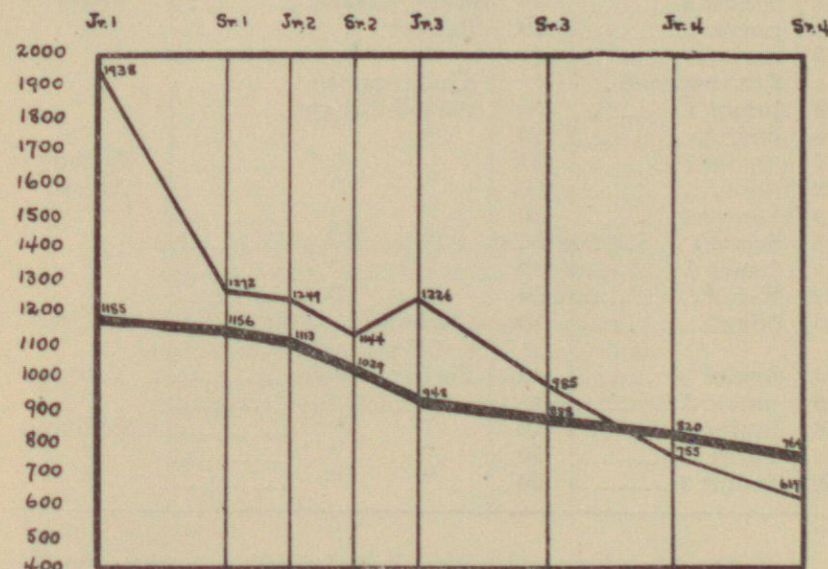
EFFECTS OF EDUCATIONAL WASTAGE ILLUSTRATED BY USE OF CURVES

To give another view of the same problem, the facts shown in the above chart are here reproduced in the form of curves.



The light line represents the proportional number of children in the various classes. The heavy line represents the membership as it would be if there were no retardation and no dropping out. It is evident that there are many children in the first grades who ought not to be there, and many children absent from the last grades who should be there.

Similar results are shown for an inspection district referred to in the 1913 Report. The number of beginners is calculated on the Ayres' basis, as the actual number is not given in the Report. The actual combined loss from slow progress and dropping out is probably much greater than that indicated by the charts. The statistician on whose work these charts are based, and who is one of the best in the city, "leaned backward" in his treatment of the data.



NUMBER, LOCATION, STYLE AND CONDITION OF SCHOOL DESKS

From the 1913 Report

"In the matter of school desks we still seem to be in the dark ages. There was a time when the reading desk was the prevailing idea for a school desk. Then most of the work of the schools was oral. It is now many years since oral work was dominant in the schools, yet still we follow the old custom of the slanting desk, modified, it is true, yet in such a form that no business man of standing from Halifax to Vancouver would tolerate it in his office for twenty-four hours. Then why do we inflict on the child who is learning to use the pen the conditions which render it well nigh impossible for him to succeed?"

The 1914 Report

contains 35 pages similar to the following:

Room No.	GRADE	Seats for	Style of Desks	Condition
1	Senior 4.....	49	Royal, Single.....	Good
2	Junior 1.....	50	Perfect ".....	"
3	Junior 1.....	50	" ".....	"
4	Kindergarten.....	75	Kindergarten.....	"
5	Junior 1.....	50	Perfect Single.....	"
6	Fourth.....	50	" ".....	"
7	Junior 2.....	50	" ".....	Medium
8	First.....	50	" ".....	Good
9	Senior 1.....	50	" ".....	"
10	Second.....	50	" ".....	"
11	Junior 3.....	50	" ".....	"
12	Mixed.....	50	" ".....	"
13	Mixed.....	50	{ 48 Bennett, Single.... } { 2 Perfect, Single.... }	Medium
14	Senior 3.....	48	Perfect, Single.....	Good
15	Junior 3.....	48	" ".....	"
16	Junior 3.....	49	" ".....	Medium
17	Third.....	50	" ".....	"
18	Senior 2.....	50	" ".....	"

Presumably, these tables were included either because the law or regulations so required, or because they give extremely valuable information, or both. May we hope next year to have equally detailed information with regard to the children who occupy the seats, as, for example:

Number of children for each school and grade who made rapid progress, normal progress, and slow progress.

The effect of poor attendance and other factors on promotion throughout the system.

The amount of dropping out for each school and grade, with causes as far as ascertainable.

Further measures being taken looking toward increased conservation of child life.

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL INSPECTION IS FULL OF HUMAN INTEREST. IT OCCUPIES 24 PAGES AND SUMMARIZES RESULTS, DESCRIBES PRESENT CONDITIONS AND CHRONICLES PROGRESS. IT SHOULD BE READ IN FULL.

School Story No. 3 will deal with
school costs.