

**THE RIGHT TRACK,
COMPULSORY
EDUCATION IN THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC**

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The right track, compulsory education in the Province of Quebec by I. O. Vincent

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COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

BY

The Late I. O. VINCENT

PRINCIPAL KING EDWARD SCHOOL, MONTREAL

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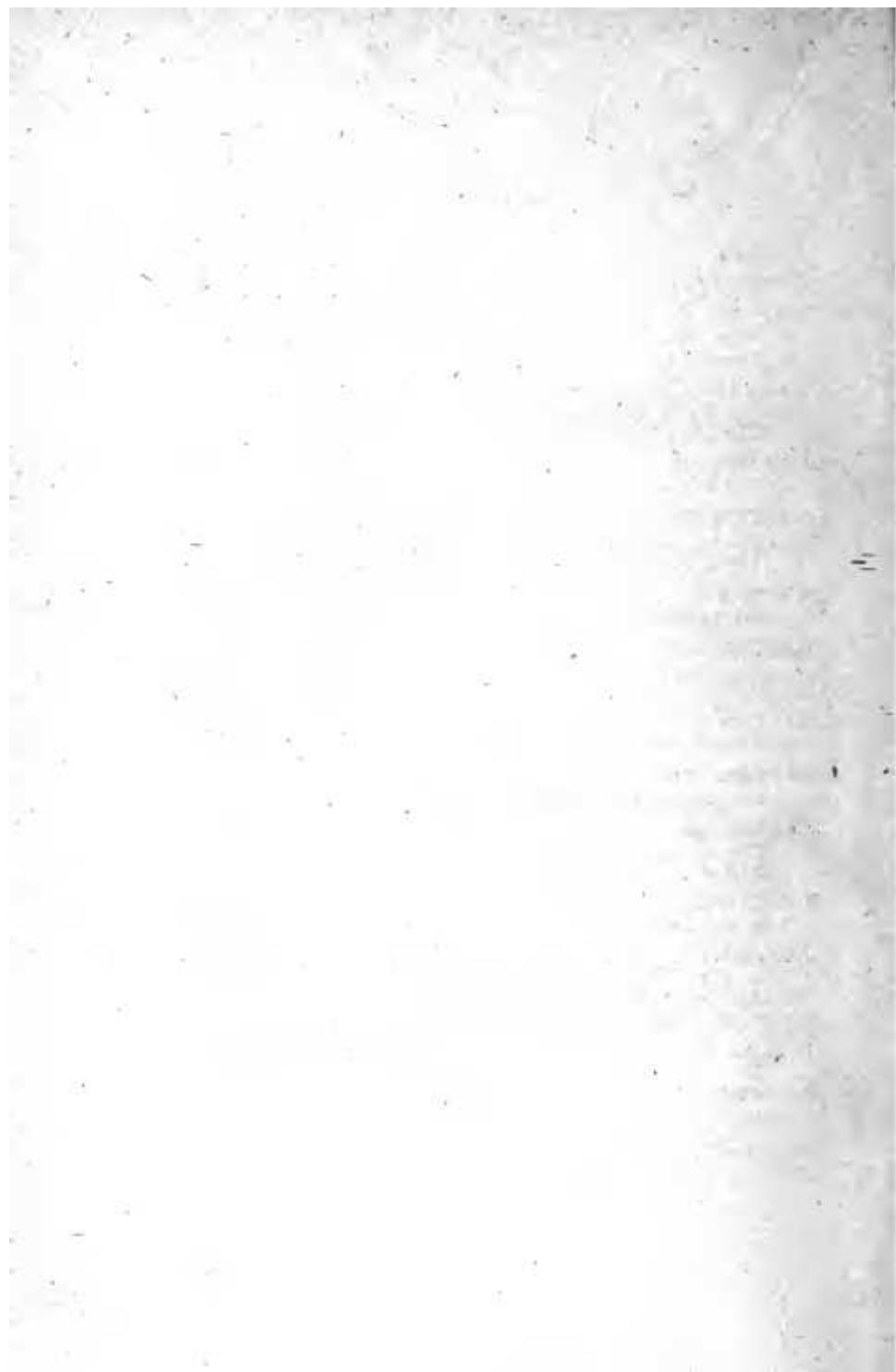
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PREFACE.

In his election campaign last autumn, after his appointment as Provincial Secretary, Hon. L. A. David invited the people of Quebec to discuss the problem of education, and gave a new incentive to the discussion by outlining his own ideals. This lead was too inviting to be ignored ; it has called forth this historical sketch of the attempt to secure an attendance law in Quebec.

I wish to take this opportunity of congratulating the Provincial Secretary on so definitely setting himself a high ideal for an educational policy. Political leaders in all countries have often been so intent on gazing at the individual trees and stumps of educational policy at close range that they have not seen the forest, nor have they been able to get a panoramic view of the problem as a whole. Hon. Mr. David is not afraid of his ideals nor of expressing them in public. When he tells the French-Canadian people of this province that they form a minority in the Dominion, and that they must therefore strive for an educational development that will give them intellectual supremacy, he has a message for the English speaking minority within the province as well. And he admits at once the existence of educational competition—a message which enthusiasts

in the recent campaign for an attendance law have been preaching on all occasions. It is just because the Provincial Secretary is a professed idealist that I have made bold to take up his challenge by writing this little book to summarize the progress made towards securing an attendance law, and to explain to English readers just what opposition has to be met and what fears have to be proved groundless before such an enactment can be put on the statute book.

I trust that no one will imagine that the purpose of this book is to criticize unduly the educational system of the province of Quebec. The people of this province are justly proud of our dual system, which suits the local requirements and works without friction, giving each section educational autonomy. The people of Quebec realize too that during the regime of Sir Lomer Gouin an extensive educational policy has been pursued, which reached its culminating point in the idealistic tone recently infused into it by Hon. Mr. David. Much of this steady progress has been along the line of improved administration and of providing better school facilities. But there is another road of educational improvement, the legislative road.

The small amount of legislation to improve education that has been put on our statute books in the past decade, as compared with

other states, must give us cause to think. If our present educational facilities are to be used to the full, the pathway to the temple of learning must not be a narrow one up rough and difficult heights that can be scaled only by those who have the will to find a way or make it ; that path must be broadened out by legislation into a mighty highway, open to all. At the top of the path stand Knowledge and Possibility, beckoning the oncoming student. But, alas, the vision of the student is often weak ; he is easily enticed from the way by some trivial allurements, or else receives no proper encouragement. To such a one the way seems very long and steep as he looks upwards from the foot of the slope. Some restraining power is urgently needed to keep children from wandering off the true path. The one efficacious fence that does prevent them from leaving the road, except at the regular stopping places, is an attendance law, which is not so much a measure of coercion as a means of meeting the counter coercion of untoward circumstances. Where such a law is in force, conscientious parents are hardly aware of its workings, just because it is meant, not to restrain them, but to assist them in fulfilling the moral obligation of giving their children an adequate education.

One who writes contemporary history of contentious politics is undertaking a hazardous venture. It has generally been considered