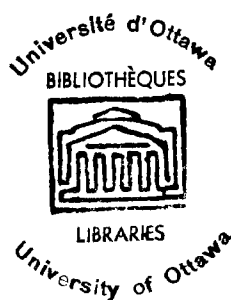


The Honorable Hector Perrier and the  
Passage of Compulsory School Attendance  
Legislation in the Province of Quebec  
1940-1943.

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A Thesis submitted in conformity with  
the requirements for the degree of  
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## Introduction

Hector Perrier was named Provincial Secretary in the Liberal government of the Honorable Adélard Godbout on October 16, 1940, and remained in this post until his resignation prior to the provincial elections of August, 1944. Perrier joined the Cabinet with two aims: the founding of a provincial Conservatory of Music, and the adoption of compulsory education. This thesis will examine the various steps he undertook in order to secure passage of a compulsory education law in 1943, and how he achieved his aim in cooperation with Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve of Quebec and the Honorable Victor Doré, Superintendent of Education for the Province of Quebec from 1939 to 1946.

Perrier was born in Montreal on July 1, 1895. Following elementary schooling at the Ecole St. Pierre, he took the classical course at the College Ste. Marie, and later his law degree at the Université de Montréal. Admitted to the bar in 1920, Perrier practised law in the Montreal firm headed by Omer Legrand, C.R. After becoming a King's Council in 1931, Perrier was associated with the Honorable Athanase David, Provincial Secretary of Quebec from 1921 until 1935.

Perrier's intense interest in education dates from his elementary school years, where he took some subjects in English and came into contact with some Irish youths of his neighborhood. Despite "des batailles de coin de rue," knowing these youths "m'a débarassé des préjugés de race." He

filled various posts in education prior to his appointment as Provincial Secretary: a member of the Montreal Catholic School Commission from 1928-1936; a member of the Catholic Committee of the Council of Education from 1934-1940 and again from 1944 until its abolition in 1963; and as a Professor of Industrial Law during the 1930's at the Université de Montréal. Perrier thus brought to his new post as Provincial Secretary in 1940 a long and multifaceted interest in Quebec's educational institutions and their problems.

In this study of compulsory education, I have not examined such closely related issues as free education or uniformity of textbooks. To do so would necessitate a much longer study and these were not, in any case, as important to Perrier as compulsory education. Likewise, I have not looked into the accuracy of the statistics upon which Perrier based the need for a compulsory education law, since these statistics, collected in what came to be called the Beaudoin report, were unavailable from any library or governmental source, or even from Père Beaudoin himself. Lastly, in the absence of any other primary sources, I have relied on newspapers and on Mr. Perrier's own personal recollections.

I wish to express gratitude to Mr. Perrier for his kindness to me during three interviews in 1971 and 1972. Mme Fernand Rochon, the daughter of Victor Doré, also accorded me two interviews during February and April, 1973.

She was able to help clarify her father's role in the passage of compulsory education. Above all, I wish to express deep appreciation to my advisor, Professor Jacques Monet S.J., whose continued interest and unfathomable patience aided me considerably in the preparation and completion of this thesis.

## Chapter One

A Brief Outline of the Foundations of  
the Catholic Educational System of the  
Province of Quebec after 1867 and  
Attempts to Enact Compulsory Education  
Prior to 1940

The principal stumbling-block to the passage of compulsory education in the Province of Quebec prior to 1943 was the opposition from the Catholic Committee of the Council of Public Instruction of the Province. Attempts by the progressive wing of the Liberal party to implement compulsory education posed a challenge to the Church's hegemony in the field of Catholic education. The Honorable Hector Perrier's singular contribution to the passage of this measure in 1943 was his ability to overcome the reluctance of the Province's Catholic authorities to countenance State intervention in a field traditionally reserved to the Church and to the natural rights of the parents.

The formation of a Council of Public Instruction in Canada East in 1856 was a short-lived attempt at a unified educational policy for the racially and religiously disparate population of that section of the Province of Canada. The division of the Council into two distinct Committees -- Catholic and Protestant -- intensified the religious and cultural differences between these two religious groups in the future Province of Quebec and oriented Catholic education there for the next century.<sup>1</sup>

1. This discussion of the 1840-1875 period is based on the following sources:

Louis-Philippe Audet et Armand Gauthier, Le Système Scolaire du Québec: Organisation et fonctionnement, 2ième édit., Montréal, Beauchemin, 1969; Louis-Philippe Audet, Histoire du Conseil de l'Instruction publique de la Province de Québec 1856-1964, Montréal, Editions Leméac, 1964; \_\_\_\_\_, La Querelle de l'Instruction Obligatoire, dans Les Cahiers des Dix, no. 24, Montréal, 1959; Michel Brunet, Québec Canada Anglais: Deux Itinéraires, Un affrontement, Montréal, HMH, 1968; Commission Royale d'Enquête sur l'Enseignement dans la Province de Québec, (Rapport Parent), Québec, Imprimeur de la Reine, vol 1., 1965. This summary of educational developments bears the imprint of its secretary, Louis-Philippe Audet.

Among the statutes which most strongly affected the evolution of the Catholic Committee and the eventual passage of compulsory education were two measures adopted by the Quebec Legislature in 1875. All Bishops whose dioceses were situated in whole or in part in Quebec became lifelong members of the Catholic Committee; in addition, the Department of Education established only eight years previously was abolished. These measures constituted a severe setback for future advocates of compulsory education, since the government had thus conceded the upper hand in education to the Church. The Episcopacy's representation on an equal basis with government-appointed laymen was formal recognition of the Church's traditional role in Catholic education and guaranteed that the pace of educational reform would be deliberate. Moreover, the permanency of the lay members of the Catholic Committee, most of whom usually sided with the Bishops, strengthened this tendency.

In brief, as long as Catholic doctrine -- based on the Church's experience with liberal governments in Europe -- and local conditions continued to determine the Episcopacy's hostility to compulsory education, this measure was doomed to failure. Although the Catholic Committee's decisions lacked the authority of canon law, the presence of all the Bishops assured its power and prestige. Moreover, even if the Catholic Committee was nominally subordinate to the Council of Education, this latter body came to meet less and less frequently as the interests of the Protestant and Catholic Committees

diverged.<sup>2</sup> The educational statutes did not, in any case, indicate what issues were to come under the Council's purview. The Committees, then, became independent from each other and from the supposedly senior Council of Education.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, the legally subordinate position of the Catholic Committee to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council remained largely theoretical, despite the fact that the Cabinet appointed one-half of its membership. The Committee possessed the initiative in legislation; the government's strongest prerogative, as far as Catholic education was concerned, was the right of veto. "The government can refuse what the Committee wants, but without declaring war on the whole structure it cannot decide anything under the aegis of the Committee without the Committee."<sup>4</sup> Several contemporary writers have deplored the "démission" of the State in the field of education in Quebec. The failure of successive governments, usually Liberal, to live up to even their minimum responsibilities in education -- in such areas as teachers' salaries -- more than any aggressiveness on the part of the Church acting through the Catholic Committee, exemplify the State's 'creeping paralysis' and 'absence of bold initiatives.'<sup>5</sup>

2. Audet, Histoire du Conseil de l'Instruction publique, p. 53. Between 1860-69, it held 33 meetings, 16 between 1869-76, only 13 from 1876-1908, and none until just prior to its dissolution in 1965.

3. Rapport Parent, vol 1., p. 30.

4. Carter, op. cit., p. 27.

5. Brunet, op. cit., pp. 89-90.; Audet et Gauthier, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

In sum, the predominant power of the Catholic Committee in the field of Catholic education was not matched by resources commensurate with the constant growth of education, particularly during the twentieth century. The State, for its part, failed to exercise the control flowing from its greater financial assets, and was not unfavourable to ecclesiastical hegemony in the field of Catholic education. Compulsory education would not be enacted so long as this state of affairs persisted.<sup>6</sup>

The feasibility of compulsory education for the elementary schools of the Province of Quebec was vigorously debated at various intervals between 1875 and 1919. Proponents of this view were particularly active during 1912-1919. Compulsory education would become a focal point of disagreement in educational reform because it promised to intervene in an area traditionally regarded as belonging to the Church and to parents. The main grounds of contention would come to centre around the statistical and doctrinal aspects which compulsory education entailed. Discussion of these items would be overshadowed to a great extent by personal acrimony between activists on both sides of the issue, especially during 1918-19.

6. Quebec was the last province to adopt compulsory education. Ontario led the way in 1871, followed by British Columbia in 1873, Manitoba in 1876, the Northwest Territories in 1888, New Brunswick in 1905. By 1905, all provinces except Quebec had enacted such statutes. C.E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, Toronto, W.J. Gage Company, Ltd., 1957, pp. 187-188. It should be added that Newfoundland was still a British possession when it enacted compulsory education in 1942.

In addition to the unalterable opposition of the Episcopacy, the adoption of compulsory education in Quebec was hampered by the radical approach of certain of its adherents. This made the movement constantly suspect in the eyes of the Bishops and conservative laymen. Of some importance was the absence of a reliable source of statistical documentation on school attendance. Supporters of compulsory education were accordingly at pains to substantiate charges that the attendance rates were in fact much lower than officially reported.<sup>7</sup>

The radical editor of Le Pays and Liberal member of the Legislative Assembly for Montreal St. Louis, Godfroy Langlois, figured among the leaders of the pro-compulsory education forces until his departure from provincial politics shortly after 1912. T.D. Bouchard, Liberal representative for St. Hyacinthe in the Provincial Legislative, and Liberal Senator Raoul Dandurand supported his efforts between 1912 and 1919.

Langlois, editor of a succession of newspapers,<sup>8</sup>

7. See the comments of the Head of the Statistics Office of the Province of Quebec, G.E. Marquis, before a meeting of the Province's school Inspectors, July 24, 1919. L'Enseignement Primaire, 1918-1919, pp. 157-158. Magnan also sent a memoire to the Catholic Committee in which he stated that "l'absence de recensement scolaire, dans certains cas, et les recensements scolaires mal faits, dans d'autres cas, sont une entrave à la publication d'une statistique complète et infirment de façon regrettable la valeur probante de ces renseignements." Ibid., p. 589.
8. La Patrie, 1897-1903; Le Canada, 1904-09; Le Pays, 1909-1913. André Beaulieu et Jean Hamelin, Les Journaux du Québec de 1764 à 1964, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1969, p. 66, pp. 135-136.

led the radical wing of the (provincial) Liberal party. He loomed large during the debates surrounding compulsory education in November, 1912. His uncompromising views on this and on other 'radical' educational reforms -- including the popular election of school commissioners in Montreal and a democratization of the Council of Education through the admission of rural and labour representatives<sup>9</sup> -- became an increasingly thorny problem for Sir Lomer Gouin, Liberal Premier of Quebec from 1905 to 1920. Gouin was trying to steer a middle course between the clergy and the radical wing of his party, many of whom had supported him in the palace revolt of 1905 which brought him to power.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it was this latter group, not the anemic Conservative party, who constituted the most serious opposition to his programme of moderate educational reform.

T.D. Bouchard, elected in 1912 in St. Hyacinthe and defeated only once before his retirement from provincial politics in 1944, proved a vocal advocate of compulsory education until he launched a highly personal attack on the provincial Inspector-General of Catholic schools, C.J. Magnan, in 1919.

9. Another of his preoccupations, the presence of unqualified teachers in elementary schools, was shared by certain Protestant educators. The Canadian Annual Review, 1912, p. 43.
10. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Montréal; Fides, vol 11., p. 185. See also Audet et Gauthier, op. cit., p. 43: "Les dogmes libéraux relatifs à l'éducation vont connaître, surtout durant le XXe siècle, des accommodements avec les nécessités électorales et surtout une adaptation aux importantes relations entre l'Eglise et l'Etat concernant la politique scolaire."

This intemperate outburst discredited his views on the matter and gave Gouin an excuse to disavow him, as he had Langlois in 1912.

Senator Raoul Dandurand, a colleague of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and a member of the Senate since 1898, lent enthusiastic support to compulsory education.<sup>11</sup> His chief contribution to the movement was his initiation of a petition in 1919, signed by one hundred prominent Montrealers, on behalf of compulsory education, and submitted to Archbishop Bruchési of Montreal.<sup>12</sup> Because he was less dogmatic than either Langlois or Bouchard, his vigorous polemical exchanges with various opponents of compulsory education shed considerable light on the advisability of such a measure.<sup>13</sup>

Foremost among the opponents of compulsory education were C.J. Magnan, the Quebec daily L'Action Sociale Catholique,<sup>14</sup> and the provincial hierarchy led by Cardinal Bégin of

11. Dandurand was born in 1861. His father, Oedipe Dandurand, was a Montreal Businessman. Dandurand, who included among his cousins Gonzalve & Joseph Doutre of the Institut Canadien, was admitted to the bar in 1883. Sir Wilfrid Laurier appointed him to the Senate in 1898. He was a close confidant of F.G. Marchand (his father-in-law) and Sir Lomer Gouin during their provincial administrations. Marcel Hamelin, édité., Les Mémoires du Sénateur Raoul Dandurand, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1967, pp. 1-9.
12. Bruchési merely promised to bring it to the attention of the Catholic Committee, which he did. No action was ever taken on it. Procès-verbal du Comité catholique du Conseil de l'Instruction publique. Réunion du 5 février 1919, p. 13.
13. L'Action Sociale Catholique, 14 octobre 1912, 18 octobre 1912, 13 novembre 1912, 20 novembre 1912.; La Patrie, 30 décembre 1918, 24 janvier 1919, 27 janvier 1919, 6 février 1919, 14 février 1919.
14. See Beaulieu et Hamelin op. cit., pp. 173-174, on the founding of L'Action Sociale Catholique. The newspaper shortened its name to L'Action Catholique in 1915, and again in 1962 when it became L'Action. loc. cit.

Quebec. In the final analysis, as long as the Bishops refused to countenance the measure, the battle for compulsory education in Quebec was decided before it began. Only when this situation was reversed, as in 1942, would the way be cleared for passage of compulsory education.

Charles-Joseph Magnan was born on November 11, 1865. He graduated from the Ecole Normale Laval and following a brief stint as an elementary school teacher, he joined the faculty there. He became a contributor to, and in 1897 owner-editor of, L'Enseignement Primaire, the official magazine of the Council of Education distributed freely to all Catholic elementary schools of the Province. From 1911 to 1929 he was Inspector-General of the provincial Catholic schools, after which he occupied a similar position in the Catholic Teachers' Colleges. For the thirty years prior to his retirement in 1941, he was also an advisor to the Catholic Committee.<sup>15</sup>

As a senior educational administrator, Magnan qualifies as one of the foremost officers of education in the Province of Quebec during the early years of the twentieth century. The suggestion, just prior to his death in 1942, that he be appointed a member of the Catholic Committee, attests

<sup>16</sup>  
to his significance. His forceful, even pugnacious, personality hardened his opposition to compulsory education and later

15. L'Enseignement Primaire, 1931-32, p. 321.

16. Procès-verbal du Comité Catholique du Conseil de l'Instruction publique, réunion du 7 mai 1941, p. 4.

brought him into conflict with the equally uncompromising T.D. Bouchard.

Magnan viewed the application of compulsory education in Quebec as both unnecessary and as an unwarranted extension of the State's sphere of activity. So long as the State guaranteed the integrity of the Bishops on the Catholic Committee, civil authorities had a responsibility to encourage the elementary school -- "le moyen le plus pratique de former le peuple au point de vue civil..." But the State must never forget, he felt, that "toute autorité vient de Dieu; les parents et les maîtres n'en sont que les dépositaires... L'éducation scolaire est nécessairement extra-familiale, mais elle ne doit être contre-familiale..."<sup>17</sup> The Church's constant reiteration to parents to encourage their children's regular attendance was far more productive than any legal sanctions.<sup>18</sup> Magnan asserted, moreover, that compulsory education was a Masonic plot to underline Quebec's Catholic foundations, as indeed had already happened in France.<sup>19</sup>

Like Magnan, L'Action Sociale Catholique campaigned against compulsory education. Founded in 1907 to act as the

17. L'Enseignement Primaire, mars, 1927, pp. 433-444.

18. Ibid., novembre, 1922; \_\_\_\_\_, septembre, 1929, p. 87.; \_\_\_\_\_, octobre, 1928, p. 72.; see also Rumilly, op. cit., vol 23., p. 46.

19. Audet, La Querelle de l'Instruction Obligatoire, p. 146, cites Magnan: "L'Histoire nous apprend que l'instruction obligatoire, puis l'école obligatoire ont été inventées dans les loges maçonniques et sont devenues... aux mains des ennemis des traditions catholiques de la France... des armes perfides et puissantes."

spokesman for the Archbishop of Quebec, it denounced compulsory education as contrary to Catholic teaching and stigmatized its advocates as Free-Masons seeking to neutralize the Catholic schools of Quebec. Its editors were extremely leery of the radical wing of the Liberal party led by Godfroy Langlois, and sometimes even of Premier Guin. <sup>21</sup>

By far the most decisive opponent of compulsory education was the Episcopacy of the Province. Cardinal Bégin of Quebec described it as a threat to the catholicism of the school system,<sup>22</sup> and on two occasions, in 1915 and 1918, the

20. Concerning the relationship of L'Action Sociale Catholique with Cardinal Bégin, Rumilly writes ( vol 13., pp. 118-119): "L'Action Sociale Catholique prendrait ses directives à l'archevêché, dont elle serait l'organe officieux, non pas officiel." He also asserts (Ibid., p.117) that Archbishop Bruchési was against the founding of a newspaper "engageant la responsabilité épiscopale." He favoured one along the lines of Le Devoir.
21. Guin had praised a Liberal backbencher's speech containing certain remarks on the need for educational reform (L'Action Sociale Catholique 8 novembre 1912). Its editorialist, L'Abbé d'Amours, wondered if the Premier was using the member involved as his mouthpiece. Guin, considerably exercised, attacked d'Amours (Ibid., 11 novembre 1912, 14 novembre 1912). For the latter's reply, see Ibid., 15 novembre 1912.
22. L'Enseignement Primaire, mai, 1919, p. 535. In a letter congratulating Magnan on the publication of his Eclairons la Route: Réponse à The Right Track, publié à Toronto traitant de l'Instruction Obligatoire dans la Province de Québec, Québec, Librairie Garneau, Ltée, 1922; (A reply to I.O. Vincent's The Right Track; Compulsory Education in the Province of Quebec, Toronto, J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1920), Cardinal Bégin wrote: "Rien, à mon sens, ne justifierait l'Etat d'imposer aux parents, de qui relève tout d'abord l'éducation des enfants, cette obligation scolaire en faveur de laquelle se fait actuellement toute une campagne et qui, dans plusieurs pays, s'associe par un lien étroit à la neutralité religieuse."

Catholic Committee decided against supporting compulsory education.<sup>23</sup> In vain Senator Dandurand cited Archbishop Bruchési's opinion that the Catholic Church had never formally condemned this principle.<sup>24</sup> Failing a favourable expression by the Catholic Committee, efforts to implement compulsory education would never succeed.

Proponents referred to compulsory education as "la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire" or simply "l'instruction obligatoire." Opponents of this reform believed it sought to institute "l'école obligatoire." Where the former phrases mean the legal requirement that a child attend class for a fixed minimum number of years at the school of his and his parents' choice, "l'école obligatoire" was a particularly emotive term invoking the spectre of an all-powerful State forcing children to attend an institution not of their choosing, and perhaps, as in France, neutral or anti-Catholic.<sup>25</sup> L'Action Social Catholique, which saw no difference

23. Procès-verbal du Comité Catholique... réunion du 22 septembre 1915, in L'Enseignement Primaire, 1915-16, pp. 100-112; and the meeting of May, 1918, in Ibid., 1917-18, p. 593. This latter meeting postponed consideration of the issue until September, 1918, at which time there was a further delay until February, 1919. Even then, no formal pronouncement was ever forthcoming. The Catholic Committee, it may be concluded, did not want to act on the matter.
24. La Patrie, 1 février 1919.
25. For an example of these accusations, see: Père Hermas Lalande, S.J., L'Instruction Obligatoire, Principes et Conséquences, Montréal, Imprimerie du Messager, 1919, and his article in La Patrie, 24 janvier 1919; Mgr. L.A. Paquet, Droit Public de l'Eglise et l'Organisation Religieuse, Québec, L'Événement, 1912.

between "école obligatoire" and "instruction obligatoire", placed partisans of any minimum attendance law into two categories: revolutionaries and Free-Masons, and "gens de bonne foi moins douteuse" who considered the State as having the upper hand over parents in the field of education.<sup>26</sup> Not until the publication of the papal encyclical Divinus Illius Magistri in 1929 was this vital distinction between compulsory schooling and a compulsory school in fact officially recognized by the Church, even though some diehard opponents of compulsory education in 1943 persisted in glossing over the difference.<sup>27</sup>

The bulk of the Province's theologians were actively hostile to compulsory education. A particularly intransigent opponent was Père Hermas Lalande, S.J., who called it an invasion of the inviolable "natural" rights of the parent, and the "supernatural" rights of the Church, to educate a child. Education was not a strict right by "justice" but rather was an act of "charity" by the parent toward his child. In any case, argued Lalande and others,<sup>28</sup> the degree of education entailed in compulsory education was unnecessary to the menial

26. L'Action Sociale Catholique, 14 octobre 1912. See also Eugène L'Heureux, Pourquoi l'instruction obligatoire fut combattue, in L'Action Catholique, 26 juillet 1941.
27. See chapter four, footnotes 28-36, and Appendix "A" containing the "A.C.P.F." letter.
28. Lalande, op. cit.; Paquet, op. cit.; L'Heureux, op.cit.

tasks many were called upon to fulfil. Only in extreme situations could the State interfere; and even then this constituted a flagrant violation of the parents' rights.

Advocates of compulsory education could cite numerous Catholic countries which had enacted compulsory education. There was also a number of higher Church officials who favoured compulsory education or at least recognized its legitimacy.<sup>30</sup> Among French-Canadian theologians there was disagreement on this very point.<sup>31</sup> A minority among them was prepared to admit the State's capacity to enact compulsory education under certain well-defined limits and conditions, without considering such legislation a violation of the individual Catholic's conscience.

Father Albert-Marie Marion, a Dominican from the diocese of Ottawa, was one such advocate.<sup>32</sup> His book in support of a limited degree of compulsory education, despite being temporarily suppressed by Cardinal Bégin, gained the support of

29. Lalonde denied any intention of discriminating against those children who failed to complete primary school and were often compelled to fill the less lucrative and more stultifying jobs. Everyone, from Prime Ministers on down, would each take a turn..!
30. Bishops Manning and Ireland. See below, footnote 51.
31. For example, Père Gohiot, who distinguished between "école" and "fréquentation obligatoire". C.J. Magnan et J.P. Tardivel, Polémique à propos d'enseignement entre Monsieur C.J. Magnan et Monsieur J.P. Tardivel, Québec, Imprimerie L.J. Demers et Frère, 1894.
32. Père Albert-Marie Marion, Le Problème Scolaire Etudié dans ses principes, Ottawa, 1920.

certain high officials in Rome and was re-published. Abbé Nazaire Dubois, and Inspector for the Montreal Catholic School Commission, was likewise favourable to the principle<sup>33</sup>. The Catholic Committee's approval of an inquiry into school attendance in the Province in February, 1919, is evidence that the Catholic authorities realized the strength of the compulsory attendance forces and the consequent need to assuage<sup>34</sup> them.

The proponents of compulsory education in Quebec exerted their greatest efforts in the 1912-1919 period. As early as the 1870's, however, Honoré Mercier, a rising nationalist politician and later Premier (1887-1891) of the Province, had favoured compulsory education. Political expediency<sup>36</sup> and personal conviction<sup>37</sup> later brought about a change

33. Abbé Nazaire Dubois, a Visitor (Visiteur) for the Montreal Catholic School Commission and one of the few clerical figures to publicly support compulsory education during the 1912-19 period, went one step further: "Personne ne voulait reconnaître qu'au fond... le pape la (instruction obligatoire) veut et que si l'on l'a, en définitive, c'est au pape qu'on la doit." Le Canada, 6 juin 1944. Dubois also praised Gouin's progressive educational policy in La Presse, 11 mars 1930.
34. Procès-verbal du Comité catholique, ... réunion du 5 février 1919, p. 13. Mention is made in these minutes of the petition presented to Archbishop Bruchési by Senator Dandurand, and of "diverses autres requêtes concernant l'Instruction obligatoire."
35. Audet, La Querelle de l'Instruction obligatoire, pp. 133-4.
36. Louis-C de Léry, S.J., L'Instruction Obligatoire dans le passé in Relations, novembre, 1941, p. 383.
37. T.D. Bouchard, Les Libéraux et l'Instruction Publique, St. Hyacinthe, Imprimerie de l'Yamaska, 1916, p. 15.

of heart. The first serious challenge to ecclesiastical hegemony in education came in 1897 when the Liberal government of Félix-Gabriel Marchand proposed to reinstitute the Department of Education abolished in 1875 and to establish a province-wide uniformity of textbooks. These proposals did not involve compulsory education, it is true, but they came on the heels of a series of proposals for the latter -- the Trades and Labour Congress in 1890 and its Montreal local in 1896, and the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers. Marchand had, moreover, failed to consult the Catholic Committee on these plans, knowing it was likely to oppose them. His bill received the Assembly's approval, but was ultimately defeated in the Legislative Council, largely through the efforts of Sir Thomas Chapais, the Conservative politician and historian who was also a member of the Catholic Committee. <sup>38</sup>

Dr. Tancred de Grosbois (L., Shefford) introduced a compulsory attendance bill into the Assembly in 1901. His measure applied to all children in the Province between the ages of eight and thirteen and detailed fines for recalcitrant parents. S-N Parent's Liberal government, like Sir Lomer Gouin's in 1912 and 1918-19, was not anxious to repeat Marchand's error in failing to consult the Catholic Committee beforehand, and the measure was easily defeated. Provincial Secretary Adélard Turgeon supported the principle behind it

38. Audet, Histoire du Conseil de l'Instruction publique, pp. 159-162.

but echoed the official Cabinet policy that the Bill's sponsor had not obtained the prior consent of the Catholic Committee.<sup>39</sup>

"The fate of the de Grosbois bill," wrote I.O. Vincent, one of the leading English-speaking supporters of compulsory education during this period, "had a soporific effect on the advocates of this reform for several years."<sup>40</sup> Support for it nevertheless continued to grow. The Montreal Catholic School Commission, the largest in the Province, declared its backing in November, 1909. The Protestant (but not the Catholic) Committee followed suit in February, 1912.<sup>41</sup> The short-lived Ligue de L'Enseignement, championed by Godfroy Langlois and Arthur Beauchesne, strongly urged the adoption of compulsory education.<sup>42</sup> While Premier Gouin gave no indication of any intent to follow their lead, his government's establishment of L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Montréal in 1907 free from ecclesiastical control was interpreted

39. Vincent, p. 57; L'Action Sociale Catholique manifested a deep distrust in Turgeon. ( 3 janvier 1912, 11 septembre 1912, 12 septembre 1912.)

40. Vincent, op. cit., p. 59

41. Dale-MacBurney resolution, Minutes of the Protestant Committee of the Council of Education, February, 1912. The Montreal Catholic School Commission did not however make a formal request to the Catholic Committee in favour of compulsory education.

42. De Léry, art. cit., pp. 383-384. Beauchesne was editor of Le Journal in 1904. Beaulieu et Hamelin, op. cit., p. 105.

by some presaging further 'radical' reform.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, in 1912, J.A. Finnie, Liberal member for Montreal St. Laurent, presented a private bill calling for the adoption of compulsory education for Protestant children aged seven to fourteen, and outlining fines for dissenting parents. This was the most sustained attempt to pass a compulsory education measure in the Quebec Legislature prior to 1943.

44

L'Action Sociale Catholique reacted swiftly to the proposal, especially to Langlois' enthusiastic backing. It was concerned that Catholic reformers might seize on the bill as an excuse to enforce its provisions on the Catholic schools.<sup>45</sup> If by compulsory education one meant that the parents retained the sole authority over the child's course of study, the newspaper was favourable to it. If, on the other hand, such a measure was "sous la garde d'une vague majorité, qui est peut-être constituée de ceux qui n'ont pas d'enfants et qui ont la fantaisie de régenter ceux des autres..." the bill was erroneous. Each father possessed

43. Rumilly, op. cit., vol 21., p. 41, claims that the Archbishop accepted the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Montréal as a lesser evil to compulsory education. Gouin, he says, agreed to affiliate it to the Université de Montréal, which he eventually did.
44. See above, footnote 20, for the circumstances surrounding its foundation.
45. Eg.: L'Action Sociale Catholique, 11 janvier 1912: on government grants to municipalities giving free books, and local members of the Legislature dispensing the grants; Ibid., 24 octobre 1912: neutrality of schools.

inalienable rights over his child. Barring criminal abuse of his offspring, no majority however large could pass legislation, such as compulsory education, which would derogate from this responsibility. <sup>46</sup>

The principle of majority rule "dans son sens ordinaire" was acceptable, continued the editors of this important Catholic newspaper. In many instances, however, particularly when one was speaking of compulsory education, it was a false notion. Parents should not "condemn their children to ignorance." Yet even in the case of the rare few who neglected their children's education, the State had no right to institute "une servitude générale pour urger l'exécution de rares obligations particulièrement négligées." L'Action Sociale Catholique warned that if the parents' basic rights in this matter were once breached, the principle of State interference would run rampant. <sup>47</sup>

The newspaper denied ever having postulated that compulsory education was ipso facto condemned by the Catholic Church. These proposals were, however, to be rejected when the circumstances surrounding their application, or their projected ends, were unsound. This was especially so when the proponents of such a measure were acting on unjustifiable or insufficient grounds. <sup>48</sup> It was on this basis that

46. L'Action Sociale Catholique, 23 janvier 1912.

47. Loc. cit.

48. Ibid., 2 novembre 1912.

L'Action Sociale Catholique replied to those supporters of compulsory education in Quebec who pointed to Ecuador's adoption of this measure in 1871, and Belgium's in 1912, as proof that Catholic Countries could indeed enact such a law. The Catholic authorities in these countries, argued the newspaper, had countenanced such action in order to forestall the greater danger of Free-Masonry. <sup>49</sup>

Although it was Finnie's proposal, Langlois and Bouchard dominated the debate. <sup>50</sup> Both spoke of the need to combat illiteracy and equalize French-Canadians' opportunities in all fields of endeavour. Langlois pointed to Ecuador and Belgium as Catholic States with compulsory education, and noted that several highly-placed Church officials, including Bishops Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota, and Manning of Westminster, favoured it. <sup>51</sup> Bouchard denounced those who intransigently opposed compulsory education "au nom d'une prétendue liberté personnelle. Si quelqu'un peut être privé de l'instruction, la société a donc le besoin de la lui garantir en établissant les lois coercitives au nom de la société." <sup>52</sup>

49. Ibid., 14 novembre 1912.

50. See Abbé Dubois' comments on the atmosphere of the debate during this time. Le Canada, 6 juin 1944.

51. Rumilly, op. cit., vol 13., p. 13, says Bishop Ireland was compelled by the American Episcopacy to retract most of this.

52. L'Action Sociale Catholique, 27 novembre 1912.

There was never any danger, despite Gouin's declaration of a free vote, that the measure would pass. The Premier was eager to reassure clerical and conservative circles of his moderate intentions in education. He accordingly denounced the campaign in favour of the Finnie bill conducted by Langlois in his newspaper Le Pays.<sup>53</sup> Gouin was of the opinion that the Province of Quebec, a model of liberty and stability, already boasted superior attendance rates in comparison with the rest of North America. The bill, not surprisingly, attracted slight support: only Langlois and five English-speaking deputies from both parties voted in its favour. 54

The defeat of the Finnie bill and the outbreak of war in 1914 diverted attention from compulsory attendance for the next few years. Gradually, however, the need for a greater number of better-educated persons to assume responsibility in war-time jobs and post-war reconstruction became apparent. To this end, the attainment of an elementary

53. "Vindicator" was the pseudonym used by Langlois to promote compulsory education in Le Pays.

54. L'Action Sociale Catholique, 29 novembre 1912. Bouchard voted against the bill on the grounds that Protestant opinion was less than unanimous in favour of the measure. In doing so, he was roundly criticized by Langlois (loc. cit.). The Conservatives' role in the debate was totally insignificant. La Patrie's correspondent termed their participation so minimal as to be feeble. The chief opposition to the Cabinet's programme of educational reform came from the radical wing of the Liberal party. (29 novembre 1912)

55. La Patrie, 1 décembre 1918.

school diploma was often advocated as a prerequisite for admittance to technical and other specialized schools. C.J. Magnan somewhat paradoxically approved of this indirect form of compulsory education. <sup>56</sup>

I.O. Vincent wrote in 1919 that the movement for an attendance law "broke out afresh" in several places in Quebec in the autumn of 1917. He attributed this to the prospect of intense, post-war international competition; the strong universal belief that equality of sacrifice during war inferred a corresponding equality of opportunity during peace-time; and the need to educate future generations against a recurrence of the events of 1914-18. <sup>57</sup>

Two local Catholic school boards, in Drummondville and St. Jérôme,<sup>58</sup> adopted resolutions in the autumn of 1917 asking the government to empower municipalities over one thousand in population to declare compulsory education on a local basis. During the sessions of 1918 and 1919, T.D. Bouchard, who had assumed the leadership of the compulsory

56. L'Enseignement Primaire, 1919-1920, pp. 157-159.

57. Vincent, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

58. The St. Jérôme school board was headed by Jules-Edouard Prévost, Liberal M.P. for Terrebonne, a member of the Catholic Committee, editor of L'Avenir du Nord, and a individual greatly admired by Hector Perrier. (Interview, 12 mai, 1971). Prévost seconded Cardinal Villeneuve's motion in favour of compulsory education at the Catholic Committee meeting of December 17, 1942. (Procès-verbal du Comité catholique... réunion du 17 décembre 1942.) The Drummondville motion was presented to the Committee, but no action was ever taken on it (Ibid., réunion du février 1919, in L'Enseignement Primaire, 1919-1920, pp. 425-426.)

education forces after Langlois' departure from the political scene, renewed his appeal on its behalf.<sup>59</sup> The government's reaction on both occasions illustrated Gouin's disinclination to embroil himself with the Bishops over the matter of a minimum period of schooling.<sup>60</sup>

Bouchard suggested five basic reforms, including compulsory education, designed to prepare the Province's schools for post-war conditions. These included: province-wide uniformity of textbooks; the granting of an elementary school diploma; and overall coordination of teaching in provincial schools, in order to bring many of the non-public teaching institutions under tighter control. He did not indicate whether these should be placed under the care of the government or the Catholic Committee. Bouchard also reiterated Langlois' demand for a democratization of the Council of Education, although he did not reveal the exact nature this reform should take.<sup>61</sup>

The representative from St. Hyacinthe failed to get any legislative support for his proposals. His colleague Jean-Noël Francoeur echoed his remark that the "camouflage

59. Langlois represented Quebec in Belgium from 1914 until his death in 1928. There is a certain irony in his appointment, for he had often cited Belgium as an example of a Catholic country which had passed compulsory education.

60. Rumilly, op. cit., vol 23., pp. 45-46: "Sir Lomer Gouin n'a pas éliminé Godfroy Langlois pour céder à Damien Bouchard.

61. La Patrie, 1 février 1918.

religieux et politique" sometimes used to discredit any discussion of compulsory education was unjust. Yet he declared this measure impractical for rural districts, given their need for farm labour, and gave only vague support to the Drummondville local option plan. <sup>62</sup>

The Provincial Secretary, Honorable Jérémie Décarie, voiced the reluctance of the Cabinet to intervene where the interests of the Catholic Committee were directly involved. The latter was already examining the feasibility of an elementary school diploma, while the Province had a measure of textbook uniformity on a local basis. <sup>63</sup> Studiously ignoring Bouchard's other suggestions, Décarie declared that the government would continue to pay heed to those "qui font autorité dans cette province en matière d'éducation" -- an evident reference to the Catholic Committee, in particular. <sup>64</sup>

Much of the controversy surrounding compulsory education in 1918-19 resulted from personal quarrels between principals on both sides. <sup>65</sup> The heated passions and venomous exchanges of opinion, in both newspaper columns and in the Legislature, did not create a social and political climate

62. Ibid., 7 février 1918.

63. This is a reference to Marchand's 1899 law providing for uniformity of textbooks on a local basis.

64. La Patrie, 7 février 1918.

65. Langlois, for example, called Magnan "le chef des grands pontifes de l'ignorance." Rumilly op. cit., vol 12., p. 90.

propitious to reasonable analysis and discussion of the merits of the issue. Typical was Bouchard's attack on Magnan in the Legislature in 1919. One parliamentary correspondent termed the attack, which Magnan witnessed from the Assembly galleries, as an attempt to impose compulsory education "par les détestables méthodes, par la diffamation, et par l'injure, par le reniement de nos efforts passés vers le progrès éducationnel et le dénigrement en masse des Canadiens-français..." 66

Bouchard blamed Magnan for having used false and misleading statistics to assure the government that attendance rates in the Province's schools were satisfactory. He cited Magnan's complaints about discrepancies in the attendance figures submitted to him, in his capacity as Inspector-General of Catholic schools, and those submitted to school Inspectors. The source was identical in both cases, Bouchard said -- the Secretary-Treasurer of the local school board. Moreover, he complained, no census was taken in the cities of Montreal, Quebec, Hull, or Sherbrooke, which together represented some one-third of the provincial population. Estimates for these cities were instead based on surrounding rural areas, a most inaccurate method of calculation in the opinion of the member from St. Hyacinthe. 67

66. La Patrie, 3 février 1919.

67. Ibid., 30 janvier 1919. For Magnan's rebuttal, see his submission to the Catholic Committee in May, 1919 (L'Enseignement Primaire, 1918-19, p. 589.); and his article "La fréquentation scolaire dans les villes de Québec et de Montréal, in Ibid., septembre, 1920, pp. 1-4.

C.J. Magnan was quick to react to this slur on his personal and professional integrity. He challenged Bouchard to repeat his charges in public, without benefit of parliamentary immunity. Bouchard refused, protesting somewhat gratuitously that he did not seek to turn the issue into a personal quarrel which would only detract from the fundamental issue of declining attendance.<sup>68</sup> On February 12, 1919, Magnan presented a spirited public defence of his opposition to compulsory education in the presence of, among others, Sir Lomer Gouin, Mgr. Camille Roy of the Diocese of Quebec, Superintendent of Education the Honorable Cyrille F. Delâge, and numerous Cabinet ministers. He offered no new facts to buttress his case, but the presence of numerous ecclesiastical and governmental representatives indicated the approval of the hierarchy and the Gouin government for his stand.<sup>69</sup>

Sir Lomer Gouin successfully withstood the efforts of compulsory education advocates in 1912 and 1918-19. At

68. A Liberal deputy, Peter Bercovitch, accused Bouchard of this. La Patrie, 20 février 1919.

69. Ibid., 15 février 1919. Its columnist ("Marcus") noted: Il est dommage que Magnan ait un peu gâté sa cause par une mise en scène un peu tintamaresque." Marcus wondered if, in view of all the publicity surrounding the speech, it was a case of "l'apothéose personnelle de l'un des employés du gouvernement." Vincent (p. 159) also asked the same question: "One may be allowed to wonder... what any government would do with an officious servant who was called upon to carry out a law which he had violently opposed, except give him a pension."

the same time, he sought to appease the progressive or radical wing of the Liberal party, a faction he had one been part of. The founding of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales in 1907 free from control, at least during its early years, of the Church is such a case.<sup>70</sup> His uses of subterfuges<sup>71</sup> to attempt to satisfy all shades of opinion on school reform is further demonstrated by his adroit handling of requests for and against compulsory education from rival trade unions in 1918-19.

The Montreal local of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada passed a resolution in August, 1918,<sup>72</sup> urging free and compulsory education, for all children in Quebec from seven to fourteen, province-wide uniformity of textbooks, and the re-establishment of the Department of Education. The annual visit from a delegation representing this Congress to the Premier of Quebec incorporated the first of these demands. Sir Lomer Gouin shrewdly avoided committing himself to compulsory and free education, however, merely labelling them "inopportune."<sup>73</sup>

70. Robert Rumilly, L'Histoire de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Montréal, 1907-67, Montréal, Beauchemin, 1966, pp. 28-29.

71. "Moyens détournés". Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol 24., pp. 38-39. See also: The Canadian Annual Review For 1919, p. 689, containing the following felicitous description of Gouin's government: "Cautions in policy but optimistic in thought and expression; opposed to extremes in sentiment or public action and with a policy which was progressive without being too far in advance of the times..."

72. La Patrie, 16 août 1918.

73. Ibid., 31 janvier 1919.

The following day, nevertheless, when Gouin met with a delegation from the rival Catholic Workers' Associations, he was more responsive to their expression of faith in the Council of Education and the actual school law. When one delegate described education beyond age fourteen as extraneous, in view of the need for adolescents' labour, Gouin seized on this opinion as evidence of the impracticality of the earlier delegation's request for compulsory education. He encouraged the Catholic Workers' representatives to keep their children in school as long as possible. <sup>74</sup>

Labour Minister (and future Premier) Alexandre Tachereau indicated to the second delegation that the government would act shortly on their suggestion that the Province's child labor law be more vigorously enforced. His government redeemed this pledge by sponsoring a bill in March, 1919, <sup>75</sup> requiring all children sixteen and under employed in all restaurants, industrial establishments, and hotels to be literate and to show proof of an elementary school diploma when applying for a position in the above places. Those under sixteen without the diploma but who were assiduously attending night school were permitted to work. Was this not "une certaine methode d'instruction obligatoire..."? Were Gouin and Tachereau in fact partially granting what had previously been denied to

74. Ibid., 1 février 1919.

75. Introduced on March 5, 1919. Ibid., 6 mars 1919.

Bouchard, Langlois, Dandurand, and others who favoured compulsory education? <sup>76</sup>

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After 1919, compulsory education declined as an issue. Although it may have played a role in the defeat of T.D. Bouchard in the general elections of May, 1919,<sup>77</sup> the teaching of English in the French-Canadian elementary schools came to replace compulsory education as the focal point of educational controversy during the years between the two world wars. Hector Perrier would play a significant role in the controversy over bilingual education.

The failure of the proponents of compulsory education to achieve their goal in the 1870-1919 period was due principally to the opposition of the Catholic Committee, the most preponderant element in the field of Catholic education in Quebec. The Committee viewed compulsory education as a threat to the religious foundations of the schools under its jurisdiction, and on two occasions spoke out against it. Moreover, Cardinal Bégin of Quebec expressed his opposition through

76. Rumilly, op. cit., vol 24., pp. 38-39; see also Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, pp. 187-188.

77. La Patrie's parliamentary correspondent reported the sequel to this affair: That there were widespread "murmurs" among the members of the Liberal caucus after Gouin had told the first delegation "allez en paix, vous aurez satisfaction", while Taschereau told them there was to be no compulsory education law that year. The correspondent asked if this indicated a element of rift or dissent in Liberal ranks. (4 février 1919)

L'Action Sociale Catholique, and in a preface to Magnan's tract against such a measure. Until the Pope's intervention in 1929, Catholic teaching did not officially recognize the State's right to impose a minimum amount of schooling in the general interest of society. As a result of this hostile climate, successive Liberal governments in Quebec were reluctant to challenge the Catholic Committee's hegemony in the field of Catholic education.

## Chapter Two

Provincial Secretary Hector Perrier's  
Successful Campaign to Obtain the  
Catholic Committee's Approval of  
the Principle of Compulsory Education  
for the Province of Quebec, 1940-1942

The failure of Liberal governments to press for compulsory education, combined with and reinforced by episcopal opposition to any such move, prevented its enactment prior to 1943. At this time, both these impediments were circumvented. The man most responsible for this chain of events was the Honorable Hector Perrier, Provincial Secretary in the Liberal government of the Honorable Adélard Godbout, from October, 1940 until August, 1944.

Perrier would work in close cooperation with two of the leading figures in the Province's educational system, Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec from 1931 to his death in 1947, and the Honorable Victor Doré, Superintendent of Education for the Province of Quebec from December, 1939 until 1946. With the help of these two, Perrier would secure the consent of the Catholic Committee for compulsory education. The principal bond among them, especially between Perrier and the Cardinal, was a belief that the Province's attendance levels were distressingly low.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after his electoral confirmation as Provincial Secretary in November, 1940, Perrier commissioned Père

1. Interview with the Honorable Hector Perrier, 12 mai 1971. Perrier related his impressions on the first time he read the annual Rapport du Surintendant de l'Instruction publique de la Province de Québec, Québec, Imprimeur du Roi (de la Reine) "... qui était pour moi une lettre absolument inconnue... Je me suis rendu compte de l'infériorité des Canadiens-français au point de vue scolarité..." He also became acquainted at this time with the Merchant Report (King's Printer, Ontario, 1928) which revealed to him that even though the Franco-Ontariens had never benefitted from government grants, "ils dépassaient de beaucoup les Canadiens-français..." in the length of their schooling.

Paul-Emile Beaudoin, S.J., to conduct a detailed examination into the Province's school attendance rates, and the success of compulsory attendance laws in Canada and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> In initiating this inquiry, Perrier doubtless wished to remove debate over compulsory education from the doctrinal plane onto the statistical level, and as well sought to supply an exhaustive documentation on the question.

At a meeting of the Catholic Committee held on December 10, 1941, a motion was unanimously passed expressing approval and cooperation for the Beaudoin inquiry. Perrier thus succeeded in involving the Catholic Committee in an extensive examination of provincial school attendance statistics. Although not completed until after passage of compulsory education in May, 1943, Père Beaudoin's provisional conclusions -- that the level of attendance in the Province's elementary schools was alarmingly low -- were a vital factor in Cardinal Villeneuve's and the Committee's, decision to support the principle of compulsory attendance at its meeting of December 17, 1942.

When it would come, the passage of a compulsory education measure would seem remarkably easy. Perrier would get

2. I was unable to locate the Beaudoin report, either through any library or governmental source, or even through Père Beaudoin. Hence I am not in a position to verify or corroborate his conclusions. See also: Réformes en éducation, in Relations septembre, 1941 p. 225: "... l'on peut et doit déplorer la pauvreté de nos statistiques pédagogiques."

the cooperation of Cardinal Villeneuve and Coré, and the Beaudoin report would persuade the Catholic Committee of the necessity of such a law. However the relative ease which would characterize the debate on the government's compulsory education bill in 1943 would come as a result of Provincial Secretary Perrier's energy and experience and his sagacious awareness of the need to involve the Catholic Committee.

Hector Perrier brought to the Provincial Secretaryship a strong belief in educational reform. This was, however, judiciously tempered by the knowledge, gained through his experience on the Montreal Catholic School Commission (1928-36) and on the Catholic Committee (1934-40) that any far-reaching reform in the field of French-Canadian education must take firm cognizance of the Church's decisive role therein. Such conditions applied in relation to changes whether in the administrative domain -- including compulsory education -- or in the field of pedagogy -- such as the reorganization of teaching programmes or the teaching of English in French-language elementary schools. Perhaps the most significant evidence of Perrier's careful understanding of the necessity to proceed with deliberate speed is his success in persuading the Catholic Committee to support the Beaudoin inquiry.

Perrier did not advocate compulsory education while serving as a school commissioner in Montreal or as a member of the Catholic Committee, nor is there much evidence he had been particularly vocal over declining attendance rates. Neither had he taken much part in the brief discussion of

compulsory education at the Liberal convention of June, 1938.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, although the dominant theme of the bye-election in which Perrier was elected in November, 1940, was the need to adapt the Province's system of education to the present and future requirements of youth, compulsory education was not itself an issue.<sup>4</sup>

These oversights, however, were deliberate. To have publicly advocated compulsory education, particularly as a member of the government (after 1940), before the Catholic Committee had done so, would have jeopardized the latter's slow but steady progress towards its acceptance: except in the mind of a Liberal "radical", compulsory attendance was unattainable without the Committee's accord. But, by his own accord, Perrier had long been interested in this issue. He described his first major speech in the Legislative Assembly -- On April 23 - 24, 1941, dealing at length with declining attendance rates and offering corroborating statistics -- as "une improvisation préparée depuis dix ans..."<sup>5</sup>

3. Le Soleil, 4 juin 1938. See also Le Devoir and L'Action Catholique, 11 juin 1938. The delegates discussed a resolution which directed the "autorités enseignantes de donner une orientation éducationnelle plus conforme aux besoins de la jeunesse." There was also some discussion of free and uniform textbooks, an issue which at least one delegate urged best left to "les grandes autorités" of the Province. Perrier described himself (Interview, 25 février 1972) as "le deus ex machina du comité politique de la convention de 1938."
4. Interview, 12 mai 1971.
5. Ibid., However, J.J.L. Comeau (L., Verdun) declared his support for compulsory education during the session of 1941. La Presse, 3 avril 1941.

As early as the spring of 1942, moreover, Perrier was ready to introduce compulsory attendance legislation into the Legislative Assembly, with Premier Godbout's concurrence. He deferred until the following year at the request of Cardinal Villeneuve, in order that the latter might have time to persuade as many Bishops as possible to support compulsory attendance through a vote in the Catholic Committee. Perrier recognized the wisdom of the Cardinal's suggestion, when he asked the Cardinal to secure a prior request of the Catholic Committee "pour que vous n'ayez pas l'air de nous suivre."<sup>6</sup>

In brief, vigorous utilisation of his powers of office, and deeply-held convictions on the need for educational reform, did not blind Perrier to the realities to be taken into account for any changes in the French-Canadian educational system. Therein lay the sure course of acceptance for compulsory education legislation; and the realization of this measure was Perrier's principal goal and greatest achievement as Provincial Secretary.

Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve's outstanding contribution to the enactment of compulsory education in May, 1943, lay in securing the prior approbation of the great majority

6. Interview, 12 mai 1971. Cardinal Villeneuve asked Perrier to accept some advice; Perrier agreed but added: "Je ne m'engage pas à le suivre." The Cardinal suggested that he would need one more year to persuade certain segments of the clergy as yet unprepared to accept compulsory education. Perrier agreed to wait, saying "un an plus, un an moins."

of the Bishops for this principle. The Cardinal did not consider compulsory education a panacea, but rather an important step in reminding parents of the seriousness of their duty towards their children's education. In 1919, the Episcopacy, led by Cardinal Bégin, had opposed it not only as an unwarranted extension of the State in a sphere of activity belonging to the Church and the family, but in addition as a potential threat to the religious foundations of the Province's Catholic schools. In 1942, all but four Bishops approved compulsory education, thereby explicitly recognizing that the above objections were no longer operative. Cardinal Villeneuve was most influential in fostering this new spirit of enlightenment.<sup>7</sup>

Victor Doré, Superintendent of Education from December, 1939, until 1946, brought to his post over forty years of involvement in education at all levels and in numerous capacities. In his annual reports he urged, like the Cardinal, the utility of compulsory attendance as a factor in persuading parents of the imperious need for regular attendance. Doré shared with Perrier a deep concern over

7. Interviews, 28 janvier 1972 and 12 mai 1971. Perrier repeatedly stressed, during our interviews, the importance of the Cardinal's influence among the other members of the Episcopacy in securing a majority favourable to compulsory education in the Catholic Committee. Hamelin, édit., Les Mémoires du Sénateur Raoul Dandurand, p. 254: "J'ai la profonde conviction que... depuis la venue du Cardinal Rouleau et son Excellence Mgr. Rodrigue Villeneuve, beaucoup d'air a aussi circulé dans les esprits."

declining attendance and did his utmost, within the limits of his official powers, to advance compulsory education. Doré in fact was appointed Superintendent on Perrier's recommendation, after the latter had been offered, and had refused, this position by the Godbout government in 1939.<sup>8</sup>

If the conclusions of the Beaudoin report were decisive in securing the Catholic Committee's acceptance of compulsory attendance in December, 1942, the Godbout government had likewise to prepare public opinion to a realization that educational reform was to be given prime consideration.<sup>9</sup> Liberal strategists accordingly presented Perrier to the voters of Terrebonne county in November, 1940 as the man best qualified to bring about, in Godbout's words, "un enseignement désormais plus réaliste et plus pratique," for the youth of the Province.<sup>10</sup>

Hector Perrier was named Provincial Secretary by the Honorable Adélarde Godbout on October 16, 1940. He had planned

8. Perrier told Godbout and Bouchard that he felt the Superintendent's job should be above politics, and that Doré, while "rouge" (Perrier's term) was not linked with any political party and was "un pédagogue." Godbout, understandably enough, was not anxious to appoint as Superintendent anyone who might be hostile to Liberal educational reforms. 12 mai 1971.
9. Perrier quotes Montesquieu: "Il faut qu'une loi soit dans le coeur des esprits avant d'être comprimée dans un texte." 28 janvier 1972.
10. See Godbout's speech at the centenary of Honoré Mercier. Le Devoir, 16 octobre 1940. Perrier was appointed Provincial Secretary October 16. He later observed to Godbout: "Vous m'avez tracé tout un programme." 25 février 1972.

to join the Cabinet six months earlier in June, 1940, but the uncertainty of the Allies' future at that time caused him to delay acceptance.<sup>11</sup> He had been actively involved in Liberal party work both on the provincial and federal levels, since 1917.<sup>12</sup> His nomination in Terrebonne county on November 3, 1940 was nevertheless his first sortie into politics as a candidate.<sup>13</sup> The riding he chose was a partially rural, partially urban metropolitan area lying north of Montreal. It perhaps would have been more natural for Perrier to run in his home riding of Laurier in Montreal; Paul Gauthier, its sitting member,<sup>14</sup> offered to resign to allow Perrier to do so. Yet Perrier was well-acquainted with Terrebonne county through his management of several provincial campaigns for the Honorable Athanase David, Provincial Secretary from 1921-1936. In addition, as recently as March, 1940, he had served as campaign manager for the sitting federal member, Lionel Bertrand.<sup>15</sup>

11. 12 mai 1971.

12. On his role during the 1939 election, Perrier comments: "... j'étais certainement, sans fausse modestie, avec le sénateur Beauregard puis Edouard Tellier... l'armature principale du parti libéral... Je me suis toujours occupé de politique..." 12 mai 1971.

13. Duplessis charged, without foundation (Perrier's denials, 12 mai 1971) that he had previously lost his deposit. Perrier also faced charges that he was parachuted into Terrebonne. Le Canada, 18 novembre 1940.

14. As did Joseph Francoeur (Mercier).

15. Honorable Lionel Bertrand, Mémoires, Montréal, Editions du Jour, 1972 p. 68.

The Liberal press of the Province greeted his nomination with enthusiasm, and throughout the campaign gave him strong support. Le Soleil, the party organ in Quebec, wrote that his nomination attested to Premier Godbout's attachment to "ce capital humain qui représente la tradition, la race, l'actif, le crédit, et la destinée de tout un peuple."<sup>16</sup> Nor would Perrier, in introducing long-overdue reforms, break with the past, but only with "la routine et l'insuffisance." Perrier possessed "les dons d'une culture exceptionnelle" in carrying out his duties.<sup>17</sup> The less partisan La Presse of Montreal interpreted the appointment as both a compliment to Perrier and a recognition, through the division of the Honorable Henri Groulx' department, of the growing primacy of health problems.<sup>18</sup>

Two of the leading non-aligned newspapers in the Province, Le Devoir of Montreal and L'Action Catholique of the provincial capital, were markedly less fulsome in their commentaries. Perrier's declaration that "le bien n'exclut pas le mieux" in matters of education was self-evident, wrote Omer Héroux, educational critic for Le Devoir. Yet he did

16. Le Soleil, 17 octobre 1940.

17. Loc. cit.

18. La Presse, 17 octobre 1940. See Le Canada for the same date. Perrier expressed the opinion that Groulx was a better Health Minister than Provincial Secretary, his interests lying more with the former than with the latter portfolio. 12 mai 1971.

concede that the new Minister's past service on the Montreal Catholic School Commission and as a member of the faculty of the Université de Montréal gave him a certain expertise in school matters. 19

L'Action Catholique, the spokesman of the archdiocese of Quebec, maintained its tradition of political neutrality. The newspaper's attitude was of importance to Perrier and Godbout, for any hesitancy on its part would reflect Cardinal Villeneuve's scepticism of their programme of educational reform. Eugène L'Heureux, its critic in the field of education, reacted sharply to Le Soleil's suggestion that Perrier's nomination foreshadowed the re-establishment of a Department of Education. 20 L'Heureux believed that education must remain free from the vagaries of politics; as we shall see, this credo was wholeheartedly shared by Perrier.

"L'enseignement", L'Heureux readily conceded, "est chose essentiellement perfectible et pour cela discutée." It must

19. Le Devoir, 18 octobre 1940.

20. L'Heureux' first wife was the daughter of C.J. Magnan, former editor of L'Enseignement Primaire and a leader of the anti-compulsory education movement in the 1912-19 period.

21. L'Action Catholique, 21 octobre 1940, p. 4, col. 1. Le Soleil, 17 octobre 1940. See also L'Action Catholique of 24 septembre 1929, p. 3, col. 1, (édit. Jules Dorion) attacking Le Soleil of 23 septembre 1929 on the same count.

The Liberal Congress of June, 1938 did discuss a resolution calling for the creation of a new Ministry "consacré exclusivement à la solution de cette grave question de relèvement et de l'établissement des jeunes." (Le Soleil, 11 juin 1938, p. 26, col. 1). No follow-up on this was reported in the newspapers. A "Ministère de la Jeunesse" was created in 1946 by Honorable Maurice Duplessis.

however "évoluer selon le cours manifestement variable des réalités humaines en vue desquelles il prépare les générations montantes." 22

In short, L'Action Catholique adopted a cautious wait-and-see attitude toward the new Minister and the government's intentions in the realm of education. In a tone somewhat reminiscent of the cantankerous Abbé d'Amours in 1922, L'Heureux fulminated against those "... diatribes lancées contre le prétendu fiasco de l'enseignement chez nous

par des journalistes que veulent avant tout saper l'influence morale de l'Eglise, par des conférenciers obligés de se reprendre quatre ou cinq fois pour expliquer ce qu'ils ont voulu dire, par des farceurs qui ne savent élever leurs propres enfants. 23

Throughout the Terrebonne election campaign, Perrier, Godbout, and other Liberal spokesman stressed that their call for a 'more practical' educational system was entirely in the mainstream of traditional educational tenets of the Province of Quebec. In accentuating the mutual interdependence and adaptability of reform and tradition in education, Perrier and Godbout sought to reassure clerical listeners that the Liberals not only understood, but highly prized, the Church's role in

22. L'Action Catholique, 21 octobre 1940.

23. Ibid., 21 octobre 1940. For an example of the semantical difficulties and confusion engendered by the word "ministère" see the Mémoire de la ligue d'Action Nationale à la Commission Tremblay sur les Problèmes constitutionnels (Imprimeur de la Reine, 1954), p. 15: this called for the creation of "... un véritable ministère de l'Éducation nationale..."

education and wished that it continue. Perrier thus rejected  
24  
Opposition Leader Maurice Duplessis' charges that Liberal dis-  
cussion of educational reform was an implied insult to cleri-  
25  
cal efforts in this domain, both past and present.

It has been stated that at no time during the campaign  
did either Perrier or Godbout speak of compulsory education.  
Indeed, Perrier spoke only in passing of the problem of decli-  
ning attendance, although he had been aware of the gravity of  
this problem for over ten years. Both men were, however, well  
aware that Perrier had posed the enactment of compulsory edu-  
26  
cation as the main reason for his agreeing to join the Cabinet.

Did this deliberate omission of that issue during the  
Terrebonne election mean that Perrier sought to mislead the  
electorate? The answer is negative. At the time, he had no  
fixed plan of strategy, lacking as he did the statistical

24. Perrier called Duplessis "un sujet de ridicule, de discrédit et de honte pour sa province" and "un éteignoir." Le Canada, 13 novembre 1940. The latter epithet is a reference to "la guerre des éteignoirs" of the 1840's in Canada East. See L.P. Audet, Le Système Scolaire de la Province de Québec, Québec, Les Editions de l'Erable, 1950, pp. 49-51.
25. Le Devoir, 29 octobre 1940. Perrier said he received some 1,500 congratulatory messages on his nomination, including several hundred from high ranking educational and ecclesiastical figures. Duplessis warned, on another occasion, that Godbout wanted to reform education in conjunction with T.D. Bouchard, "ce qui présente un avenir rempli de promesse." 28 janvier 1972.
26. "J'ai deux hobbies," Perrier told Godbout before he joined the Cabinet, "l'instruction obligatoire et le conservatoire de Musique."

proof-later provided by the Beaudoin report-needed to bring this question to the Province's attention. It is interesting to note, moreover, that no Opposition speaker accused him of plotting compulsory education. <sup>27</sup>

"Nous ne cherchons pas à renverser un ordre établi, mais à le mettre au point... Nous entendons construire sur ce qui existe, et non à côté."<sup>28</sup> During the campaign, Perrier called for legislative measures which would take into account the present and future requirements of the Province's youth. He translated Godbout's call for more realism in educational goals into a programme of easier access to technical schools, revision and simplification of teaching programmes, vocational guidance, and more widespread learning of English at the elementary school level. <sup>29</sup>

The Liberals did not intend to reduce Church influence in the sphere of education, nor was there any thought of suppressing religious orders. <sup>30</sup> Perrier categorically opposed the

27. "Je n'ai pas fait ma lutte sur l'instruction obligatoire, j'ai fait ma lutte sur les insuffisances de la fréquentation scolaire et de notre degré d'infériorité... Je ne savais où j'irais à ce moment-là... j'ai fait ma lutte pour susciter un réveil." 28 janvier 1972.

28. Godbout speaking at a campaign rally for Perrier, Le Canada, 18 novembre 1940.

29. One of Perrier's aims in introducing compulsory education in 1943 would be to prolong the period of schooling in order that reforms such as these might be effectively realized. See below, footnote 67.

30. This is probably an oblique reference to the series of anticlerical laws passed in France between 1900 and 1905 which resulted in the suppression of many religious orders in that country.

establishment of a Department of Education, on the grounds that it would only encourage instability and interference in an area of activity where continuity was essential.<sup>31</sup> The Episcopacy and the Council of Education must continue to exercise a significant role in education. Perrier had but one aim: to ensure the youth of Quebec an equal chance of success in all areas of endeavour.<sup>32</sup>

The Liberal party's efforts to stress the moderation of their educational reform platform were reflected in their presentation of Perrier in a non-partisan light. Godbout praised his new Provincial Secretary as "un homme qui connaît non seulement le passé mais voit l'avenir avec confiance." He lauded Perrier's selflessness in entering the Cabinet "dans un moment critique, où il faut souvent marcher sur son coeur pour faire son devoir." His fidelity, his experience, and his undoubted intention to work hard on behalf of the Province's youth were highly prized by the government.<sup>33</sup> Perrier deserved election not because he was a Liberal, or even because of the Liberal party, but for "la cause plus élevée, celle de la préparation de notre avenir." He was the man best qualified to furnish young Quebeckers with the educational tools of the future.<sup>34</sup>

31. Le Canada, 4 octobre 1940.

32. Loc. cit.

33. Ibid., 18 octobre 1940.

34. Ibid., 4 octobre 1940. Godbout had made a similar declaration earlier in his career: "Je n'aime pas la politique, j'y suis parce qu'on m'a convaincu que je pourrais rendre quelques services à la classe agricole de ma province." L'Action Catholique, 2 février 1938.

Perrier echoed the tone of these sentiments. Any scruples or hesitations about leaving a life of relative tranquillity for the whirlwind of politics were put aside by the example set by Premier Godbout. "Vous avez pu présumer de mes forces," he told his leader, "mais vous n'avez pas présumé de ma bonne volonté." His early life had not been easy, he suggested; he had, on the other hand, been most fortunate in benefiting from the aid and solicitude of his elders.<sup>35</sup> In accepting this new post he sought to repay the confidence that others had placed in him:

La lutte que je poursuis n'est pas la mienne, c'est celle de tout le comté de Terrebonne et toute la province... Je ne vous fais pas de promesses autre que celle de faire mon devoir et de mener à bien la mission qui me sera confiée.<sup>36</sup>

Such a statement underscores his and Godbout's conception of the Terrebonne bye-election as the Province's ratification of a progressive social policy, not as a mere electoral contest.<sup>37</sup>

Perrier's most composite statement of his political beliefs and principles, as they pertained to education, during the bye-election is found in his address of November 13, 1940. It is permeated by the theme both he and Godbout had enunciated

35. Le Canada, 18 octobre 1940.

36. Ibid., 18 novembre 1940.

37. On November 13, Perrier declared: "Nous attendons de nos hommes publics non plus des discours patriotiques, non plus du cabotinage avec un drapeau, mais plutôt un acharnement sincère à servir notre petite patrie dans leurs moindres actes politiques." Le Canada, 14 novembre 1940.

at the campaign opening November 3rd: the need for an end to divisive partisanship and the adoption of common goals in the pursuit of educational progress on behalf of the Province's youth. Perrier considered the Godbout government, and the Liberal party, the best vehicle to achieve this end. Thus what seems, at first glance, a highly partisan attitude is in fact quite consistent with Perrier's belief in Liberalism as an ongoing source of progress.<sup>38</sup>

Education, Perrier told his listeners, would enable the French-Canadian to escape "L'infériorité où il se débat énergiquement mais sans gains véritables." "Elle forme l'enfant pour son rôle adulte, l'adulte forme la famille qui à son tour forme l'enfant de concert avec l'école." Parochial attachment to outmoded methods threatened to "pousser notre petit peuple à la ruine en feignant de le sauver." Should the tenants of this outlook succeed, "le talent le plus généreux, l'intelligence naturelle la plus vive, les aptitudes les plus évidentes, étoufferont ... sans l'aération, la culture, la fécondation dirigée par l'école." Perrier urged the adoption of "un enseignement réaliste" -- one which accentuated French-Canadians' natural characteristics and their milieu. Such a pragmatic education included an adequate knowledge of

38. See, for example, Perrier's speeches on the following occasions: Le Club Wilfrid Laurier (Le Canada, 8 février 1939); Association St. Denis Dorion (Ibid., 13 janvier 1943); Association libérale de Mercier (Ibid., 2 mars 1943).

39. Le Canada, 14 novembre 1940.

English. French-Canadians were but three millions in the midst of 150 million English-speaking persons.<sup>40</sup> Perrier was careful to align himself with what had been the official position of Liberal governments since 1875 against the creation of a Department of Education. Like the Honorable Athanase David, Perrier's law partner, before him, he was sincerely opposed to this step.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the newly-appointed Provincial Secretary reminded his listeners that the State's role in education was not thereby diminished. The government's "collaboration constante, concrète, agissante" was essential to the clergy if the latter was to ensure that education continued to be relevant to the present and future needs of Quebec's youth. Added Perrier: "Cette collaboration, je m'engage à ce qu'il l'obtienne." Thus Perrier was assuming a fundamentally different stance on the question of State intervention in education than that held by Sir Lomer Gouin's government during the compulsory education debates of 1912 and 1918-19.<sup>42</sup>

40. Loc. cit., Perrier quoted in his defence the Pope's letter to Cardinal Bégin in 1918 urging him to encourage bilingualism among his priests of his diocese so as to better serve their parishioners. See also Quartier Latin (which Perrier founded -- 12 mai 1971) reprinted in Le Devoir, 13 décembre 1940: "... les soi-disants pédagogues de l'élection de Terrebonne qui pérorent à côté de l'anglais..." Perrier had warned his listeners that a refusal to recognize the necessity of English would leave the French-Canadians with a language "réduite aux besoins usuels de la vie courante."

41. 12 mai 1971.

42. He echoed Godbout's belief that the State was not only assuming its rightful role in education, but was doing so at the express wish of the Church. (Le Canada, 4 novembre 1940).

This radio address, a cohesive statement of Perrier's political credo in the sphere of educational reform, is eloquent testimony to his belief that French-Canadians' energies must be directed towards "la formation de la jeunesse pour le combat de la vie quotidienne." Its apolitical tone finds echo in the speeches he delivered in the Assembly on April 23-24, 1941, and during the compulsory education debates in 1943. In Perrier's opinion, the outcome of the vote in Terrebonne would demonstrate "si les mensonges et les profiteurs de la politique ont plus de poids que notre volonté de servir." This was the overriding question of the bye-election, in his view.

The Liberal press, led by Le Canada, was lavish in its praise of Perrier and his campaign. It gave full coverage to all his activities and complete endorsement to all his pronouncements. So great, in fact, was the attention paid to the Terrebonne election by all the Province's major newspapers that not only the Liberal press but also a hostile newspaper like the Montreal independent Le Devoir followed Godbout's lead in virtually ignoring another bye-election called for the same day in Mégantic. Liberal strategists obviously viewed Perrier's adherence to the Cabinet as vital to the realization of their political programme, and as a result concentrated all their efforts on his successful election.

43. Ibid., 14 novembre 1940.

44. The Liberals lost this bye-election to the Union Nationale.

45. For a humorous account of political meeting, see La bataille des haut-parleurs in Le Devoir, 13 novembre 1940, where Union Nationale and Liberal speakers situated in adjacent tents tried to overpower each other. The only calm person at the meeting was a peanut vendor doing a brisk business.

L'Action Catholique closely scrutinized Godbout's and Perrier's statements. L'Heureux saw no danger in the phrase "un enseignement réaliste et pratique", in the light of "reassuring declarations" by both men and by Superintendent Doré.<sup>46</sup> He continued to express confidence in their essential moderation, although of course his comments transcended political considerations. Education was "constantly perfectible," but he warned against those who "were less favourably inclined than Premier Godbout to what our educators have accomplished." Continuity was important in education,' added L'Heureux, rejoicing at Perrier's declarations against the creation of a Department of Education. He feared the daily interference of electorism "dans un domaine où elle accumule plus de ruines que partout ailleurs, ce qui n'est pas peu dire."<sup>47</sup>

L'Heureux endorsed the government's desire for "une réadaptation constante de notre enseignement aux étapes successives de notre marche vers un destin providential."<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding his declarations against the depredations of politics in both the economic and social spheres and his ready acceptance of Godbout's opposition to 'State paternalism',<sup>49</sup>

46. L'Action Catholique, 21 octobre 1940.

47. Ibid., 25 octobre 1940.

48. Loc. cit.

49. Ibid., 12 novembre 1940.

he recognized the State's right to promote the war effort through providing qualified personnel and to "créer partout une atmosphère plus favorable à l'instruction scolaire et post-scolaire." 50

La Presse summed up the general journalistic reaction to Perrier's election:

On sait que M. Godbout, encouragé par les progrès accomplis dans la restauration des finances du Québec, se propose maintenant d'entreprendre une campagne avec l'approbation et l'aide du clergé, pour adapter plus exactement notre système d'éducation aux exigences nouvelles, aux temps nouveaux. L'élection de M. Perrier, en apportant l'aide d'un spécialiste, les confirmera sans doute dans leurs desseins. 51

Even though compulsory education was not an issue during the bye-election, the Terrebonne voters' confirmation of Perrier as Provincial Secretary was a necessary step in its ultimate realization. As Le Canada noted in June, 1941: "le mouvement favorable à l'instruction obligatoire a retrouvé son élan avec l'avènement du gouvernement Godbout et l'accession de l'honorable M. Perrier au ministère." 52 Perrier's campaign had stressed the need to modernize the Province's system of education in response to constantly expanding objectives. The government's intentions to intervene more actively in the sphere of education had thus received the approval of the electorate of Terrebonne,

50. Ibid., 21 octobre 1940.

51. La Presse, 19 octobre 1940.

52. Le Canada, 28 juin 1941.

and by implication, in Liberal eyes, of the whole Province.

As a member of the Cabinet, Perrier could begin to exercise the powers and prerogatives of the Provincial Secretaryship to bring compulsory education to fruition. This was no easy task however. Perrier had to prove, to the satisfaction of his colleagues in the Cabinet and in the Liberal party, but above all to the Catholic Committee and Cardinal Villeneuve, that attendance in the Province's schools was sufficiently irregular and slight to warrant and even dictate the adoption of compulsory education. Once convinced, the Cardinal would succeed in persuading the great majority of the Episcopacy of its necessity.

The single most positive factor in Cardinal Villeneuve's decision to support compulsory education was the Beaudoin report's revelations that Quebec needed such a law to combat low attendance rates. Shortly after his election in 1940, Perrier obtained the Cabinet's approval to empower Père Paul-Émile Beaudoin, S.J.,<sup>53</sup> to carry out an absolutely independent inquiry<sup>54</sup> into school attendance rates and laws in Quebec and elsewhere. In December, 1941, the Catholic Committee led by Cardinal Villeneuve granted unanimous approval to Perrier's

53. As I have pointed out, I was unable to locate the Beaudoin report.

54. Père Beaudoin was the brother of Philippe Beaudoin, the founder of the Ecole des Arts Graphiques and a friend of Perrier's. 25 février 1972.

request, submitted by Superintendent Doré, that Father Beaudoin's questionnaire into school attendance rates be sent to all the elementary schools of the Province. <sup>55</sup>

Perrier's success in achieving the unanimous sanction of the Catholic Committee for such a widespread investigation into school organization across the Province was a master-stroke. This action would enable him, by December, 1942, to have his long-held suspicions about declining attendance vindicated by an independently conducted and exhaustive analysis, sponsored by the supreme authority in the field of Catholic education in Quebec -- the Catholic Committee. It is true, of course, that the Beaudoin report was not completed until after the passage of compulsory education in 1943. The trend of its findings was, nevertheless, sufficiently clear and startling by the spring of 1942 to, in Perrier's words, "corroborer tout ce que j'avais affirmé antérieurement." <sup>56</sup>

In the course of an interview on January 28, 1972, Perrier categorically stated:

55. Procès-verbal du Conseil Catholique..., 18 septembre 1941, pp. 10-15. This proposal was later modified (Ibid., 16 février 1942, pp. 15-16) to take the form of a questionnaire incorporating various questions and sent to different educators and religious bodies throughout the Province. In addition, any plans for a Congress of Education were thus shelved. (Ibid., 18 septembre 1941, pp. 14-15).

56. 12 mai 1971, 28 janvier 1972.

Si vous écrivez quelque chose sur l'instruction obligatoire, n'ayez pas peur d'affirmer que le Cardinal Villeneuve, pour résoudre le problème de l'instruction obligatoire, a été, je pourrais dire, mon principal collaborateur et que si il y a eu une transformation dans l'opinion des évêques au point d'arriver à un vote favorable à l'instruction obligatoire, c'est sans doute le travail que Son Eminence le Cardinal Villeneuve a fait auprès du clergé. 57

Cardinal Villeneuve's intervention with the other members of the Episcopacy would produce a positive vote in favour of compulsory education at the December 17, 1942 meeting of the Assembly in 1943. The Cardinal shared with Perrier a belief in the need to boost attendance rates in the Province's elementary schools. Fundamentally, therefore, Perrier's commissioning of the Beaudoin report was the decisive factor in the Cardinal's support of compulsory education.

Hector Perrier had worked with Cardinal Villeneuve on the Catholic Committee since 1934, particularly since the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Coordination and Examinations in 1937.<sup>58</sup> More recently, he had appeared before the Catholic Committee at its December 11, 1940 meeting, just after his triumph

57. Perrier also added (12 mai 1971): "Le Cardinal Villeneuve a travaillé avec M. Doré et moi-même d'une façon constante et régulière sans jamais fléchir."
58. Procès-verbal..., septembre, 1937, pp. 16-17. Perrier gives full credit to Cardinal Villeneuve for the founding of these Sub-Committees, but feels it unfortunate that their decisions were not binding on the Catholic Committee as a whole. A topic had to be reopened for plenary discussion at each presentation of a Sub-Committee report. 12 mai 1971.

59

at the pools. On that occasion, Perrier had pledged to publicize the Committee's work, and had reiterated his unalterable opposition to the establishment of a Department of Education.<sup>60</sup> It is significant that these remarks had won the approval of the Cardinal, as reflected in the editorial columns of L'Action Catholique.<sup>61</sup>

The arrival of 1941 saw Perrier getting the measure of his new portfolio. While fully aware of the need to proceed circumspectly in his promotion of compulsory education, he did not wait upon the conclusions of the Beaudoin report to draw the Cardinal's, and the Province's, attention to the necessity for an examination of the attendance situation in the Province's elementary schools. On April 23-24, 1941, in his first major speech to the Assembly, he chose to speak on declining and irregular attendance -- "la déficience primordiale de l'enseignement primaire" -- which Father Beaudoin's early research had already revealed. He made apparent his conviction, moreover, that this problem was particularly acute with regard to the

59. In doing so, Perrier was not only bidding a temporary farewell to his colleagues, but in addition was following a customary practice of all Provincial Secretaries. Perrier paid a later tribute to the Committee in the Assembly: "J'ai été membre du Comité catholique... Je connais les travaux de mes collègues pour améliorer notre enseignement. Je leur en rends un hommage public." Le Canada, 24 avril 1941.

60. Procès-verbal..., 11 décembre 1940, pp. 11-12.

61. Eugène L'Heureux, Le problème de l'éducation, 20 décembre 1940; Trois déclarations de M. Perrier, 19 décembre 1940: "S'il a voulu l'exprimer, c'est qu'il n'a pas craint de se compromettre en faveur du Comité catholique..." His declaration against a Department of Education, L'Heureux wrote, was the "most significant" of all the "reassuring statements" by the Minister.

Province's Catholic population.<sup>62</sup>

"Je ne suis pas ici pour plaire, mais pour servir. C'est ce que je fais."<sup>63</sup> In an address described by Le Canada as "... fortement documentée, qui ramasse en faisceau une foule de notions dont quelques-unes ne sont pas gaies,"<sup>64</sup> Perrier registered his shock at the unfavorable statistics on school attendance in the Province. Congratulating Godbout on his "cri d'alarme" of September, 1940, and his appeal for "un enseignement désormais plus réaliste et plus pratique," Perrier termed inferior and irregular attendance an issue demanding the serious attention of the Assembly.<sup>65</sup>

Attendance statistics showed vast differences in the performances not only between Quebec schools and those of other Provinces, but also between the Catholic and Protestant elementary schools within Quebec. What was the value of formulating new programmes of study when attendance at some levels was so low?<sup>66</sup> He subsequently added that the implementation of these new programmes would be rendered easier by the promise of regular attendance.<sup>67</sup>

62. Le Canada, 24 avril 1941.

63. Le Canada, 24 avril 1941. La Presse, 24 avril 1941, commented "Sans le déclarer catégoriquement, le Secrétaire provincial a laissé entrevoir... une sorte d'instruction obligatoire..."

64. Le Canada, 24 avril 1941.

65. Perrier described this speech as "une improvisation préparée depuis dix ans... Je n'avais jamais pensé que je pourrais me servir de ces statistiques-là."

66. La Presse, 24 avril 1941.

67. Le Canada, 16 avril 1943.

Too many students spent six to seven years in elementary school only to complete three or four years. Less than one-half -- 41.4% -- of Catholic students reached the sixth year of elementary school, compared with 89.7% of these enrolled in Québec's Protestant elementary schools. For the seventh year, these figures were 23.3% and 83.0% respectively; by the ninth year, they fell to 6.7% and 47.9%. In Ontario, by contrast, 95% of the students completed their sixth year of schooling, 54% their ninth year. At the Montreal Technical School, only 25% of its French-Canadian students finished their studies, compared with 75% of the English-speaking Quebeckers.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, concluded Perrier, 80% of French-Canadian students completed only six years of schooling. Some students, he admitted, did continue on in technical and classical courses after leaving elementary school,<sup>69</sup> but this percentage was negligible. The classical colleges, moreover, suffered a 75% dropout rate. Religious and civil authorities must act together

68. La Presse, 25 avril 1941.

69. Perrier relates he was contacted by a close friend, who was a member of the Sulpician order, after his April 24, 1941 speech. When asked by him if he was sure of the statistics he had quoted, Perrier replied that for once in his life he had been prudent, and that his figures were "en deça de la vérité." 25 janvier 1973.

to combat what he termed "trop de Séraphin Poudrier."<sup>70</sup> Many school commissioners and parents had failed to grasp that education was a child's most indispensable resource. Parents must be made to understand that "si leur vie est passée; ils doivent songer à l'avenir de leurs enfants."<sup>71</sup>

The obvious implications of this speech -- La Presse wrote that "sans le déclarer catégoriquement, le Secrétaire provincial a laissé entrevoir une sorte d'instruction obligatoire"<sup>72</sup> -- came to the attention of several highly

70. La Presse, 8 octobre 1942, p. 13, col. 2-3. Séraphin Poudrier was the famous antihero of Claude-Henri Grignon's (Valdombre) novel Un Homme et son Péché, Montréal, Centre Educatif et Culturel, 1965. Many people, including apparently Maurice Duplessis, felt the avaricious habitant portrayed in the book was an unfortunate reflection on French-Canadians. In the session of 1942, Duplessis accordingly attacked Perrier for authorizing the purchase 300 copies of the book. Duplessis was undoubtedly aware, in addition, that Grignon was a personal friend of Perrier's and had indeed spoken on his behalf at some election rallies during the Terrebonne election. La Presse, 8 mai 1942.
71. La Presse, Le Canada, 25 avril 1941. La Presse wrote sometime after this speech, and just after Victor Doré publicly declared his support for compulsory education (below, footnote 102): "Il est de plus en plus évident que le gouvernement Godbout désire rénover le système d'éducation scolaire dans la province. Les changements que l'on ferait seraient radicaux. On établirait l'instruction obligatoire et on donnerait de plus en plus une éducation technique et scientifique à notre jeunesse pour lui ouvrir d'autres voies que les professions libérales." 16 mai 1941.
72. La Presse, 24 avril 1941.

placed educational officials, including the Cardinal. The latter accordingly took advantage of Perrier's presence at a State dinner at Spencerwood only two weeks later to raise the matter of attendance rates with the Provincial Secretary.

This was the most significant meeting Perrier had yet had with Cardinal Villeneuve. In reply to the Cardinal's query as to whether he was certain of the validity of his statistics, Perrier did not hesitate to assert that they were "en deça de la vérité."<sup>73</sup> In return, the Cardinal offered the opinion that while compulsory education was not a panacea, Perrier should continue to shed light on the situation. He further suggested that Perrier and Superintendent of Education consult with the other members of the Episcopacy; several of them had already been in touch with him concerning the Provincial Secretary's speech.<sup>74</sup>

It is clear that Perrier had attracted the interest of a powerful potential ally, and he is perhaps not amiss in

73. 12 mai 1971.

74. Perrier relates he had only limited success with the Bishops he visited. He described Mgr. Comtois (Trois-Rivières) as "un autre Tardivel tout recopié," and Mgr. Langlois (Valleyfield) who would likewise be opposed to compulsory education, "a toujours été bleu avant d'être catholique." Perrier adds: "Evidemment M. Doré a beaucoup de mérite, mais c'est un laïc... Même si Doré était marguillier à Notre-Dame et Président de l'Université de Montréal il passait pour un franc-maçon comme moi d'ailleurs." In spite of this, says Perrier, Doré enjoyed the confidence of the higher clergy to some extent. 28 janvier 1972.

in referring to the Cardinal's encouragement at this time as "une approbation tacite." <sup>75</sup>

Cardinal Villeneuve was well aware of the reformist bent of the Godbout Cabinet. In the first session of the Legislative Assembly following the elections of 1939, the Godbout government had passed a law giving women the right to vote in provincial elections, despite the publication of <sup>76</sup> an episcopal letter against such a measure in February, 1940. Yet to suggest, as does Robert Rumilly, that the Cardinal supported compulsory education in 1942 because of reluctance to once again oppose a determined government and thus perhaps incur any diminution of episcopal stature, would be to misread the situation surrounding compulsory education during the 1940-43 period. <sup>77</sup>

75. Perrier again lauds the Cardinal: "Je veux signaler... la parfaite collaboration que j'ai reçue de Son Eminence le cardinal Villeneuve, qui était obligé de marcher à contre-courant contre tout son vieux clergé... surtout de la diocèse de Québec." Concerning the Spencerwood conversation, Perrier adds: "A partir de ce moment-là, je crois qu'il était convaincu de la nécessité de l'instruction obligatoire autant que je l'étais moi-même... Dès le début, le cardinal a été un progagandiste convaincu de la nécessité de l'instruction obligatoire." 25 février 1972.
76. Perrier seems to feel that the Cardinal signed this letter in order to assuage the more conservative Bishops. Moreover, Perrier affirms that at no time was there any mention of this when he and Premier Godbout met with the Cardinal on later occasions. 25 février 1972.
77. Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol 40., pp. 102-103.

Provincial Secretary Perrier had been keeping the Cardinal posted on the progress of the Beaudoin report during 1941 and 1942. The Cardinal undoubtedly realized that the mounting evidence of declining attendance rates would quite possibly result in the introduction of compulsory education, a measure which the Episcopacy of the Province had opposed in the past. In addition to Father Beaudoin's findings, the Cardinal's acceptance of this situation was rendered more palatable by two conditions in particular: the Vatican's approval of compulsory education under well-defined conditions in 1929;<sup>78</sup> and the Cardinal's own conception of the State's role in education, as formulated on several occasions prior to Perrier's appointment as Provincial Secretary.

Cardinal Villeneuve's concern was the place of the Church in the educational system of the Province. The Church's intervention in this area was motivated by an intent to supplement, not supercede,<sup>79</sup> civil society. At the meeting of the Catholic Committee of September 23, 1936, highlighted by the visit of recently-elected Premier Duplessis and his

78. See below, chapter three, footnote 90.

79. L'Action Catholique, 18 octobre 1937. He defined the social order as "la juste hiérarchie des classes, chacune heureuse de son sort et jouissant de bonheur qui lui revient légitimement." Loc. cit.

Provincial Secretary, Dr. Albiny Paquette, the Cardinal praised Quebec's system of education as being almost unique in the world, in that it was free from electoral vicissitudes.<sup>80</sup> The Council of Education was able to place "la formation des esprits et l'intérêt des âmes" ahead of "les caprices et les mesquineries de l'électoralisme le plus variable."<sup>81</sup>

These words evidently led to some controversy for at a subsequent meeting of the Catholic Committee Cardinal Villeneuve saw fit to correct what he referred to as "une fausse interprétation" put on them.<sup>82</sup> He had not sought to increase the hold of the Church on public life at the expense of the State. "Si j'ai demandé plus d'unité hiérarchique dans notre enseignement et une compréhension plus large de son influence" this should in no way be construed as an "instinct de domination" or political intent "dont je n'ai le moindre goût." Nevertheless, he warned his audience that "la critique est aisée, mais l'art est difficile."<sup>83</sup>

80. This is not entirely true. One need only look at Perrier's and Doré's dismissal from the Montreal Catholic School Commission in 1936.

81. L'Enseignement Primaire, 1936-37, pp. 176-177. He also spoke of "le nouveau vent qui souffle."

82. Ibid., p. 454.

83. L'Action Catholique, 18 octobre 1937, p. 25, col. 2. See also the Cardinal's sermon before the "Semaine Sociale de St-Jean" (Le Devoir, 28 septembre 1942) in which he discussed "la nécessité des vertus morales et civiques du peuple pour qu'une démocratie se maintienne... Ce sera des élites, he added, "qui en rayonnent l'exemple et qui en descendent la pratique de degré en degré jusqu'aux très humbles. Voilà pourquoi la religion, formatrice de la conscience et source de justice et de dévouement au bien commun, est essentielle au fonctionnement honnête et à l'efficacité du régime démocratique dans une nation."

Cardinal Villeneuve's concern with educational matters began to focus more and more on declining rates of attendance after 1940. We may surmise that this was a direct result of Perrier's initiation of the Beaudoin report. At the Spencerwood banquet in May 1941, the Cardinal had sought out Perrier to discuss with him the implications of his April 23-24, 1941, speech dealing with attendance rates, and had encouraged Perrier in his course of action.

Not long after, the Cardinal publicly revealed the extent of the interest Perrier's words had aroused in him. In a letter read by all curés of the Province to their parishioners in September, 1941, he pointed to the need for a more assiduous rate of attendance at both the elementary and primary superior levels. <sup>84</sup> The parents' duty to give their children an adequate education was "une obligation très grave." The ready availability of commercial and industrial employment resulting from war-time demand did not justify parental ignorance of "la nécessité supérieure de procurer à leurs enfants une instruction convenable..." To underscore the import of his admonishment, he added that "ceux qui y manquent volontairement sans d'impérieuses excuses ne sauraient être admis aux sacrements avant de réparer leur négligence coupable." <sup>85</sup>

84. For a study of the origins of this grade and its introduction into Quebec, see J.-P. Labarre, L'Ecole Primaire Supérieure, Montréal, Editions Albert Lévesque, 1934. Labarre was a member of the Catholic Committee at the time of the compulsory education recommendation, and he voted in its favour.

85. Semaine Religieuse, reprinted in Relations, septembre, 1941, p. 238.

He reiterated this deep concern with attendance at the meeting of the Catholic Committee in September, 1941. The examination of the Rapport du Comité de Régie du Certificat d'études primaires of the Catholic Committee for 1940-41 showed an alarmingly low rate of primary school attendance across the Province.<sup>86</sup> This prompted the Cardinal to affirm that, in the arid words of the Procès-verbal of the Catholic Committee, "l'insuffisance de l'inscription et l'irrégularité de la fréquentation constituent un problème inquiétant et... il y a lieu d'en rechercher la cause et les remèdes." Many advocated the adoption of a compulsory education law, he continued. Before such a "coercitive measure" was undertaken, however, he suggested that it would be more profitable to determine the reasons for this situation. He accordingly proposed the holding of an educational congress, at which educators and other competent persons would be invited to give their views not only on the attendance problem, but also on the very foundations of the primary school system.<sup>87</sup>

In the spring of 1942, Perrier returned to visit the Cardinal. He informed him that he had secured Cabinet backing to proceed with the introduction of compulsory education in the Assembly.<sup>88</sup> The Cardinal, as we have learned, shared his concern over declining attendance, and Perrier had been keeping him

86. Procès-verbal..., 18 septembre 1941, pp. 10-15.

87. This congress never took place. (above, footnote 55).

88. On the question of the cooperation received from the Cabinet and officials of the Provincial Secretariat, Perrier declared: "Je n'avais eu le moindre obstacle ni de l'un côté ni de l'autre."

fully informed of the progress of the Beaudoin inquiry. His Eminence did not therefore attempt to persuade the Provincial Secretary to the contrary, but did ask him if he would accept some advice. Perrier, who described his relations with the Cardinal as "cordial", assented to this but added that "je ne m'engage pas à le suivre." Opinion in certain circles was not sufficiently prepared, pointed out the Cardinal. Perrier accordingly agreed to a delay of one year in the presentation of his proposal to the Assembly.<sup>90</sup>

Up to this point, Cardinal Villeneuve's encouragement had not involved the Catholic Committee. This state of affairs ended, however, when the Sub-Committee on Coordination and Examinations, of which the Cardinal was Chairman, first gave unanimous consent to the principle of compulsory education at its meeting of November 2, 1942. Its recommendation was scheduled for discussion by the plenary session of the Catholic Committee on December 2, 1942. Nature, however, dictated otherwise, for on that day the Quebec region was blanketed by a severe snowstorm. Perrier nevertheless made a valiant effort to counter this unexpected turn of events. He borrowed Justice

89. The text of Perrier's proposal was based on the text of the Vatican City's law on compulsory education of 1929, a copy of which had been supplied by his brother l'abbé Armand Perrier. At this meeting, in the spring of 1942, the Cardinal jocosely added: "Donc on ne peut pas dire que vous n'êtes pas orthodoxe." 12 mai 1971.

90. 12 mai 1971.

Minister Léon Gasgrain's "voiture à cheval... qui pouvait monter la côte... On a cherché un certain nombre d'évêques en voiture de patrouille pour les rendre au parlement." All in vain. The bread-wagon could not muster a quorum.

Perrier was in a quandary. Since he planned to introduce his measure for debate during the forthcoming session of the Provincial Legislature, early approval by the Catholic Committee was essential. Cardinal Villeneuve suggested convening a special meeting of the Committee for December 17, 1942, instead of waiting for the next scheduled meeting in February, 1943, thus confirming Perrier's confidence in the Cardinal's commitment to compulsory education. At this meeting, only six members of the Committee -- four Bishops and two laymen -- voted against the principle of compulsion. Indeed, Cardinal Villeneuve showed considerable impatience with a motion presented by a former Superintendent of Education, Cyrille-F. Delâge, to delay consideration of the question until

91. 12 mai 1971. Casgrain was his "coach" (Perrier's words) on parliamentary tactics during his first months in the Assembly.

92. Procès-verbal..., réunion du 2 décembre 1942, p. 26.

the Beaudoin report was completed. <sup>93</sup>

Through personal persuasion of hostile or reluctant <sup>94</sup> members of the Episcopacy, and through timely intervention on behalf of a quick settlement of the issue of compulsory education, at the December 2, 1942 meeting, Cardinal Villeneuve strongly affected the outcome of the issue. Equally important, his actions implied a trust in the Godbout government which the Episcopacy, on earlier occasions, had been reluctant to extend to the Liberal administrations of Félix-Gabriel Marchand and Sir Lomer Gouin.

At the decisive December 17, 1942 meeting, Cardinal Villeneuve spoke at length on the principle of compulsory education and the reasons behind his Sub-Committee's

93. Op. cit. The Beaudoin report took much longer to prepare than expected. At the September 30, 1942 meeting of the Catholic Committee, (See: Procès-verbal..., p. 65), Doré stated: "De son côté le révérend Père Beaudoin presse le travail de compilation qu'il a entrepris relativement à la fréquentation scolaire. C'est une tâche colossale qui dépasse de beaucoup tout ce qu'on avait imaginé, mais il y a lieu d'espérer que l'oeuvre sera menée à bonne fin d'ici peu de temps et qu'elle nous fournira les constatations très intéressantes."
94. Again Perrier reiterates his gratitude to the Cardinal: "C'est probablement lui... qui a dû discuter de la question avec très grand nombre d'évêques qui ont voté pour le projet de loi au Comité catholique." 12 mai 1971.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that one of those anxious to postpone action on compulsory education until the completion of the Beaudoin report was former Superintendent of Education Cyrille-F. Delâge, who nevertheless had voted for the compulsory education recommendation in the November 6, 1942 Sub-Committee meeting.

recommendation in its favour.<sup>95</sup> Conditions justifying the Episcopacy's previous opposition to its adoption were no longer operative. Catholic doctrine fully sanctioned the measure of State intervention embodied in the principle of compulsory education. Until the beginning of the twentieth century the Church had, with reason, opposed it on two grounds. Firstly, it involved an unwarranted degree of State interference; in addition, its proponents were too often associated with revolutionary or Masonic goals. Noting that the papal encyclical Quadragesimo anno of 1931 had limited State intervention in the affairs of "groupements particuliers" unless these were unable to carry out their responsibilities themselves, the Cardinal pointed out that in the past, education was not a matter of public concern, but was purely a familial responsibility.

In education, as in matters involving capital and labour, the Church had come to sanction a necessary degree of State intervention in the interests of general society. Catholic doctrine on compulsory education was now "nette et ferme sur le point jadis discuté", and there was no longer any cause "d'éprouver le moindre scrupule pour la question de droit." The question of 'opportunité' was for each individual to decide; but it was incontestable that, as the Committee's

95. Procès-verbal..., 17 décembre 1942.

96  
inquiry revealed, "une multitude d'enfants" in Quebec were  
for numerous reasons -- poverty, parental negligence, family  
needs -- "privés du bienfait de l'instruction." 97

No one, emphasized the Primate of the Canadian Church,  
had the naiveté to believe that such a law was a nostrum.  
It would, however, allow the educational authorities of the  
Province to "étudier le mal plus à fond et d'intervenir par  
les moyens les mieux appropriés." While he understood the  
hesitations of some in the face of such a law, he reiterated  
his intention to abide by the stand taken by the Sub-Committee  
on Coordination and Examinations. 98

The Cardinal not only asserted the rectitude of  
compulsory education. He manifested considerable umbrage at  
the brief presented by the Montreal Saint-Jean-Baptiste  
Society suggesting that the Episcopacy had been subjected to  
undue pressure on the question. The conduct of the Bishops  
was motivated solely by the results of Father Beaudoin's in-  
quiry, Cardinal Villeneuve continued, and each would adopt

96. I was unable during my research to discover whether  
Superintendent Doré carried out an independent inquiry  
into declining school statistics. Nor did his daughter,  
Mme Fernand Rochon, reveal the existence of any such  
study. Thus Doré was presumably speaking of the Beau-  
doin inquiry.

97. Procès-verbal..., 17 décembre 1942.

98. Loc. cit.

the attitude on compulsory education which best served the "intérêts supérieurs" of the people.<sup>99</sup>

The situation facing the adoption of compulsory education in 1943 was, in brief, diametrically opposite to that extant in 1912-19. Cardinal Villeneuve was instrumental in guaranteeing the passage of compulsory education through his spadework among the other members of the Episcopacy.

In addition to the Cardinal's indispensable aid in the eventual adoption of compulsory education, Perrier also benefitted from the close cooperation of his friend and kindred spirit Victor Doré, Superintendent of Education for the Province of Quebec from December, 1939 until 1946.

Doré's appointment as Superintendent came about on the strength of Perrier's recommendation to the Godbout government. Perrier had himself been offered the post, but had turned it down on the grounds that someone less politically aligned should occupy it. Doré's nomination capped a forty-year period of involvement in education at all levels in Quebec. He began his career as a teacher in the Montreal Catholic School Commission's system in 1899; later he served as Treasurer to the Commission from 1916 to 1927. In this latter year, he was named by Premier Alexandre Taschereau to a Royal Commission mandated to reorganize this same school

99. Perrier referred to Jos-A Trudel, one of those who voted against compulsory education in the Catholic Committee, as "un janséniste". 25 février 1972.

board. He was named President of the reorganized Commission in 1928 and remained in that post until replaced by Premier Duplessis' nominee in 1936. <sup>100</sup>

Perrier and Doré had known each other as early as 1921, when Doré was a teacher at the Université de Montréal and Perrier was a student there. Their association really began in 1928, when Doré secured Perrier's appointment to the Montreal school board. Perrier also worked with him on the Catholic Committee. "Je peux dire", notes Perrier about their work on compulsory education,

que M. Doré, M. Godbout puis moi ont travaillé... d'une façon intense et à chaque jour au résultat à atteindre sans jamais avoir la moindre mésentente ou la moindre divergence d'opinion. <sup>101</sup>

Doré, in fact, was the first major educational official in the Province to publicly advocate compulsory education in the 1940-43 period. <sup>102</sup> It is far from coincidental that such a

100. As was Perrier (12 mai 1971). Perrier is complimentary of Doré's successor, Armand Dupuis, who appointed Doré Secretary of the Commission after his dismissal as President. Doré, relates Perrier, was penniless. (Ibid.).

101. Biographes Canadiennes-Françaises, Laprairie, Imprimerie du Sacré-Coeur, 1935, p. 422. See also two interviews with Perrier: 12 mai 1971, 28 janvier 1972.

102. Rapport du Surintendant de l'Instruction Publique, Québec, Imprimeur du Roi, 1939-40. See La Presse's reaction to his comments (above, footnote 71). Doré also added: "Je crois que le moment est venu de poser cette question bien franchement devant la conscience publique. "Rapport du Surintendant..., 1939-40, p. xvii.

declaration should come just after the appointment and electoral confirmation of Hector Perrier as Provincial Secretary, and even more after Perrier's meeting with Cardinal Villeneuve at Spencerwood.

Doré's predecessor, Cyrille-F Delâgé, quoted with approval the following description of the Superintendent's role: "... il est l'organe des deux Comités" whose duty was to "... faire exécuter leurs discours, connaître et répandre leurs idées."<sup>103</sup> Doré envisaged himself as much more than the mouthpiece of the Protestant and Catholic Committees, as his support for compulsory education in the Catholic Committee indicates.

The principal source of Doré's thoughts on compulsory education is his annual report to the Secretary of the Province summarizing the year's developments in education in Quebec. His report, he wrote on different occasions, must above all "serve as a statement of facts" not a representation for a particular viewpoint.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, he based his recommendation of compulsory education in his first report on his prerogative, as a member of both Committees, to urge upon his colleagues "toute suggestion qu'il croit de nature... à promouvoir le progrès de l'éducation dans la province."<sup>105</sup>

103. Cyrille-F Delâgé, Conférences, Discours, Lettres, Québec, L'Action Sociale Limitée, 1919, p. 48.

104. Rapport..., 1942-43, p. xxiv.

105. Ibid., 1939-40, p. x. Rumilly commented: "Doré sert les desseins de son ami Perrier avec beaucoup d'intelligence. Il ne se prononce pas ouvertement (sic), ce qui accroît sa force. Au Conseil de l'Instruction publique, il gagne l'estime du cardinal et des évêques." Op. cit., vol 39., p. 46.

He gave strong backing to the Beaudoin inquiry, and his motives for supporting compulsory education were identical to the Cardinal's -- declining rates of attendance prevented the Province's youth from taking advantage of all opportunities. In his view, the need for farm labour and parental apathy were the principal causes of poor attendance. <sup>106</sup>

\* \* \*

Provincial Secretary Hector Perrier had achieved what no other previous proponent of compulsory education had done. He had, with the close cooperation of Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve and Honorable Victor Doré, convinced the highest Catholic educational authorities of the Province of Quebec that compulsory education presented no threat whatsoever to the foundations of the French-Canadians' school system. Compulsory education, as conceived by Perrier and endorsed by Cardinal Villeneuve and the Catholic Committee, was a progressive measure not only necessary to halt a serious decline in the Province's attendance rates; equally importantly, it was vital to the continued expansion and improvement of that very system.

The greatest credit therefore for the passage of a compulsory education law in Quebec in 1943 would lie with Provincial Secretary Perrier. His unshakeable confidence in its necessity was tempered at all times by pragmatic conduct

106. Rapport..., 1939-40, p. xvii.

toward the attainment of his goal. In commissioning the Beaudoin report, he provided the original impetus for the measure, and his careful preparation of the terrain prior to the introduction of the government's compulsory education bill in the Assembly would bear fruit in the course of the debate there. No Opposition spokesman would offer any substantial or cogent criticism of the government's proposal.

## Chapter Three

The Debate Surrounding the Enactment  
of Compulsory School Attendance  
Legislation in the Legislative Assembly  
and Legislative Council, April-May, 1943

The Catholic Committee's approval of the principle of compulsory education at its meeting of December 17, 1942, guaranteed the adoption of Perrier's major goal as Provincial Secretary. The bill which the Godbout government would introduce to the Legislative Assembly on April 7, 1943 carefully adhered to the stipulations of the Catholic Committee's recommendation.<sup>1</sup> As government policy, moreover, in contrast with the Finnie bill of 1912, its success was assured by the large Liberal majority in the Assembly and the Legislative Council.

The speech from the Throne opening the 4th session of the 21st Quebec Legislature on February 23, 1943 confirmed Perrier's declaration to the press<sup>2</sup> on December 17, 1942 that the government would act with despatch on the Catholic Committee's recommendation to establish compulsory education. The actual debate, from first reading to royal sanction, would last only seven days in both Chambers. Uneventful first reading on April 7 was followed by Perrier's speech opening the debate on second reading on April 15. After Easter recess, from April 16 to April 26, debate on second reading continued on April 27, April 29, and May 4. Following third

1. La Presse, 8 avril 1943.
2. Perrier told the press: "C'est avec l'unique désir de bien servir la province que le gouvernement étudiera la suggestion du Comité catholique et fera tout en son pouvoir pour y donner suite." Ibid., 18 décembre 1942.

reading on May 6, the bill was briefly debated in the Legislative Council and was given royal sanction on June 23, 1943.

The most notable Liberal participants during the debate were Perrier, T.D. Bouchard, Fernand Choquette, a Liberal backbencher representing Montmagny, and Premier Godbout. Perrier, who was chiefly responsible for the presentation and defence of the government's viewpoint, arranged the order of speakers, and his decisions in this regard would give rise to one of the rare personal clashes among the strong advocates of compulsory education.

Fearing Bouchard's penchant for verbal violence, he suggested that the Premier speak last in order to restore the atmosphere of decorum Perrier wished to surround the bill with. Perrier would himself open the debate. Bouchard, the last survivor of the 1912-1919 compulsory education debates, felt that his long advocacy of this measure gave him the right to introduce the bill. Quite surprised, Perrier replied that he did not wish to confer upon himself "un certificat d'incompétence."<sup>3</sup> A compromise was reached when Godbout decided to introduce the bill during the Throne Speech debate. The order of speakers was thus determined. Godbout would introduce the measure, Perrier would open the debate on second reading, to

3. L'Événement-Journal had written the same day: "On nous dit que le projet de loi de M. Perrier est déjà passablement avancé." 18 décembre 1942.

be followed by Bouchard and others. Godbout would close the debate. The irony was that Bouchard's speech would prove much more decorous, and Godbout's more violent, than expected. <sup>4</sup>

Three non-Liberals would support Perrier's proposal -- Jonathan Robinson (UN, Brome), Dr. Camille Pouliot (UN, Gaspé-Sud), and the Independent René Chaloult (Lotbinière), although only Dr. Pouliot actually voted for it. Robinson shared the government's view, albeit with considerably less enthusiasm, that a compulsory education measure would constitute a much needed fillip to parental neglect. Pouliot's support was based on conditions indigenous to Gaspé's poverty. Chaloult's motives for backing the measure were effectively obfuscated by his attacks on the economic disadvantages facing the French-Canadians which the bill, in his judgment, failed to remedy.

The Union Nationale would choose to oppose the bill.

4. 12 mai 1971. The following Liberals also participated in the debate: April 27 - Caron (Hull), Boucher (St. Henri); May 4 - Comeau (Verdun), Guérin (Ste-Anne), Bonvouloir (Iberville); April 29 - Hble Valmore Bienvenue (Bellechasse), Minister of Hunting and Fisheries. It is suprising that Provincial Treasure Matthewson did not participate in the debate. He and Perrier had known each other prior to 1936 when Perrier was on the Montreal Catholic School Commission and Matthewson a member of the Montreal Protestant School Board. Perrier pays tribute to him and Bouchard for having, among all the Ministers, consented to the greatest cuts in their budgets to release more money for school reform.

Onésime Gagnon (Matane), Dr. Albini Paquette (Labelle), and Paul Beaulieu (St. Jean-Napierville), as well as its leader, the Honorable Maurice Duplessis, were that party's standard bearers.<sup>5</sup> None of them would succeed in delivering a serious challenge to Perrier's bill. Duplessis, like Godbout, waited until third reading to intervene in any important way. In insinuating that the Liberals hastened to pass the measure out of awareness of public hostility to compulsory education, he proved to be the only member of his party able to force Perrier onto the defensive. This line of argumentation would constitute the Union Nationale's principle attack on the bill. Nevertheless, one of the features of the debate is the limited role he played. In addition, Opposition speakers made glib but unconvincing efforts to explain away the Episcopacy's support for the principle of compulsory education.

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On February 24, Dr. J.W. Robidoux (Richelieu-Verchères) and Thomas Guerin (Ste-Anne) introduced the Throne Speech debate, praising compulsory education as a highly progressive measure. Robidoux described the bill as necessary in order to "ajouter à la force des berceaux celle des cerveaux." Guerin, for his part, criticized the "archaic notion" that "l'instruction doit être laissée entièrement à la discrétion des parents,

5. Hormidas Langlais (Iles-de-la-Madeleine) also spoke for the Union Nationale during the debate, on May 6.

quelles que soient leur ignorance et leur pauvreté." <sup>6</sup>

Godbout then amplified their remarks. He characterized the bill as a means to "protéger la famille, le noyau essentiel de la société." <sup>7</sup> Laws must reflect the people's thinking, and his government certainly envisaged no radical reforms in education. He stressed, however, that he and his colleagues fully intended to "préparer une génération de gens instruits, éduqués, qui aient le sens social et un excellent esprit public. N'allons pas leur jeter dans l'esprit et dans le coeur des... semences de mort." <sup>8</sup>

On April 15, Perrier opened the debate on second reading. His speech ranks as the most successful of his parliamentary career. It marks the first time Perrier could publicly advocate the need for a compulsory education law without fear of appearing to pressure the Catholic Committee in this direction or of compromising the government's plans for reform in education and indeed all other areas. The founding of commercial and technical schools and (as Doré had pointed out) the teaching of English at the elementary school level <sup>9</sup>

6. La Presse, 25 février 1943.

7. Ibid., 25 février 1943.

8. Ibid., 25 février 1943.

9. See the Rapport du Surintendant..., 1939-40, pp. xviii-xix. As we have noted, however, bilingualism and the teaching of English were not issues in the compulsory debate.

were of no avail without the guarantee of a child's presence in school for a minimum number of years.

The absence of dogmatism and rigidity in this address contradicts the claims of his opponents that compulsory education presaged a wholesale reorganization of the Province's educational system. Respect for the integrity and sagacity of the Catholic Committee was coupled with reaffirmation of his dedication to moderate reform in the sphere of education. Like his other speeches during his tenure as Provincial Secretary, it was characterized by careful documentation and logical presentation of arguments. By way of contrast, the Union Nationale's arguments would prove diffuse and unsubstantiated.

Perrier's speech had a dual purpose: to demonstrate the necessity of a compulsory education law for the Province, and to show that it was entirely consonant with the philosophical bases of the present system of education in Quebec. 10  
Once Quebeckers -- and he meant primarily French-Canadians -- were cognizant of the merits of compulsory education they

10. The emphasis in the thesis is on the attendance rates for students of the French-language elementary schools, as differed from the English-language Catholic schools and the Protestant schools. On this point, see for example, Arthur Tremblay, Contribution à l'étude des Problèmes et des Besoins de l'enseignement dans la province de Québec. Commission royale d'enquête sur les Problèmes Constitutionnels, 1955, p. 19: "Il semble donc que l'on puisse conclure... que les taux de persévérance des populations scolaires protestants sont nettement supérieures à ceux des populations catholiques." The same situation was applicable on the superior levels.

would enthusiastically support, not merely countenance, the government's initiative.

Perrier repeated his conviction, first publicly voiced two years earlier, that "nous sommes en déficience nette et il nous faut réagir." He described the compulsory attendance bill as both "efficace et féconde"; every legislator would be anxious to support this "acte de clairvoyance, de sagesse et de vrai patriotisme."<sup>11</sup> In the first part of his speech, he concentrated on parental inattentiveness, the main cause of poor and irregular attendance; the second part reaffirmed the theme, broached in the Terrebonne campaign, that educational and financial problems were closely linked.

Too many students abandoned their education at age twelve or thirteen, and attendance was distressingly irregular in most schools.<sup>12</sup> To substantiate these charges, he offered a series of statistics culled from the Beaudoin report. In 1942, of 571,840 students between the ages of six and fourteen, under the jurisdiction of 1,968 school boards across the Province, 48,930 were not even included in the school census. Moreover, average daily absenteeism was 83,670. Therefore, on a daily basis, Perrier informed the Assembly, 132,600 youngsters went without the benefits of education. The schools of the Montreal Catholic School Commission, responsible for the

11. Le Canada, 16 avril 1943.

12. La Presse, Le Canada, 16 avril 1943.

education of over 20% of the Province's elementary pupils, had shown an average daily attendance of 88,437 out of 105,456 enrolled. "D'une façon générale," he concluded, "on peut dire que dans la province, 20% des enfants ne fréquentaient pas à l'école." 13

Neither ill-health nor distance from school adequately explained this "alarming situation." The latter cause was only a pretext for absenteeism, while the Province had been making tremendous strides in improving health care. Nor was poverty, in his view, a serious argument: not only had several school boards provided aid to indigent families, but more importantly, what economic benefit could be furnished by a child of eight, ten or twelve? In Montreal, during the last four months of 1942, only a very small number of the 4,600 who left school did so because of poverty. 14

The main reason for poor attendance, summed up the Provincial Secretary, was parental negligence. A minority of parents, although few in number, were unaware of their responsibilities towards their children in this regard. It was more important for a poor child to get an education than

13. Ibid. See also Eugène L'Heureux, Fréquentation, assiduité et ponctionnalité scolaire, in L'Action Catholique, 3 septembre 1937: "... l'assiduité est peut-être plus nécessaire que la longue fréquentation..."

14. Le Canada, 16 avril 1943. He also cited the following figures culled from the Montreal inquiry indicating the relative importance of different reasons for absence: 655 -- moved; 473 -- to work; 360 -- parental negligence; 306 -- help around house; 78 -- parental poverty.

it was for the scion of a wealthy family; the latter, Perrier suggested, could always fall back on his "relations sociales."

Every attempt to persuade negligent parents to carry out their responsibilities had failed. State intervention was now necessary in the form of compulsory education. He assured the Assembly that such action should in no way be construed as criticism of the Church or an attack on its prerogatives in education. The State and the Church had a joint role to play in education. "Personne [sic] ne contestera<sup>15</sup> à l'Etat le droit d'imposer, dans l'intérêt de la société, un minimum de connaissances utiles pour permettre aux jeunes d'entreprendre avec quelque chance de succès la lutte pour la vie." Only Iraq, Mexico, Argentina, the West Indies,... and Quebec did not have a compulsory education law, he pointedly added.<sup>16</sup>

After thus establishing the need for his proposal, Perrier correctly anticipated that Opposition criticism would focus on the supposed financial inequities of the proposed legislation. The second section of his speech of April 15,

15. Many would not agree: Le Nouvelliste, 15 mars 1943; Le Progrès du Saguenay, 6 mai 1943; Duplessis (below, footnotes 67-70); and the Bishops who voted the compulsory education recommendation.
16. Perrier added a "mise au point" later in the debate: Argentina and Mexico had adopted such laws, while Iraq was in the process of doing so. Moreover, he informed the Assembly, the "most progressive parts" of the West Indies were following suit. La Presse, 30 avril 1943.

1943, accordingly dealt with the financial burdens the law would allegedly impose on school boards across the Province as a result of the expected increase in school enrollment.

The links between the financial and pedagogical aspects of education had been a major theme of the Terrebonne bye-election. He had told a Kiwanis Club audience in 1941 that a decline in property assessment, the difficulty in collecting taxes, and a constantly increasing number of students were at the source of school boards' problems.<sup>17</sup> Property taxes should continue to defray the costs of elementary education, but he had opposed any increase in these rates. New forms of revenue for the Catholic primary superior schools must be found.<sup>18</sup> Not only a uniform property tax, but a better distribution of the neutral panel tax was imperative. Some multi-million-dollar corporations in Quebec contributed nothing, or next to it, toward educational costs.<sup>19</sup> A more equitable system of municipal taxation was in order.<sup>20</sup>

It was not exaggerated to speak of "crises" in regard to the situation facing certain school boards, he had told the Assembly in 1941. The Montreal Catholic School Commission faced a deficit of \$0.8 million, the Protestant Board of Montreal \$0.4 million in 1941. These were expected to

17. Le Canada, 19 juin 1941.

18. Ibid. Consult, in addition, his speech of April 24, 1941.

19. See Fréquentation scolaire obligatoire, in Relations, janvier, 1943, pp. 1-2.

20. La Presse, 7 octobre 1942.

double the following year to \$1.5 million and \$.8 million respectively.<sup>21</sup> He decried the "legislation désuète et disparate" in the matter of school boundaries; one village on the Island of Montreal had seven boards lying within its limits. In sum, Perrier had warned the Assembly, sources of new revenue were crucial whether this took the form of municipal, school, property, or another kind of tax. "Si nous voulons faire des progrès, nous devons consentir des sacrifices vovus.<sup>22</sup> Québec ne peut rester en arrière." Perrier had even hinted at a necessary reorganization of the school system: "On a poussé l'enseignement en gardant un système vieux de cinquante ans...; plus l'enseignement est poussé, plus il est dispendieux."<sup>23</sup>

"La population doit s'imposer des sacrifices si nous voulons aller de l'avant."<sup>24</sup> The influx of more students and the assumption of tuition costs by local school boards constituted a saving of \$700,000 to parents but represented a substantial burden to many boards. The government fully intended to aid these, for it was resolved to "prendre tous les moyens pour donner aux enfants de la province un minimum d'instruction."<sup>25</sup> He amplified these remarks in April 15, 1943

21. Le Canada, 24 avril 1941.

22. Le Canada, 19 juin 1941.

23. La Presse, Le Canada, 25 avril 1941.

24. La Presse, 24 avril 1941.

25. Le Canada, 16 avril 1943.

speech. The government would willingly assume costs incurred as a result of increased enrollment. In the case of the Montreal Catholic School Commission, abolition of tuition fees meant the loss of \$30,000 in revenue annually, but was amply offset by the addition of 10,000 new students, as a result of the passage of compulsory education.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, substantial grants had been made to the Montreal, Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Chicoutimi boards, while through grants to rural municipalities the number of female teachers in their employ rose from 130 to 390 between 1939 and 1942.<sup>27</sup>

As the keynote government speaker, Perrier's delivery set the tone for the debate. Of at least equal interest to all members of the Assembly was T.D. Bouchard's speech of May 4th. Le Soleil, the Liberal party's staunchest ally among the provincial capital's newspapers, had earlier observed that "Teddy" would take an active part in the debate

26. La Presse, 5 mai 1943. Perrier did not mean that these students would now attend because they could not previously afford to; rather, he undoubtedly harkened back to negligence as the reason for their absence.

27. La Presse, 7 mai 1943.

d'autant plus qu'il prévoit qu'il faut déloger quelques adversaires de leurs derniers retranchements. Quelle satisfaction ce sera pour lui de voir triompher l'une des nombreuses réformes dont il a été le champion patient mais toujours résolu.<sup>28</sup>

Bouchard moreover seemed to have been considerably piqued at Perrier's decision not to allow him to open the debate, even though the Provincial Secretary had assured him that full credit would be given to the predecessors of what was "une lutte de cinquante ans."<sup>29</sup> Would he jeopardize the passage of the bill?

Strangely enough, the old rouge's actual speech, some sixty-five minutes in length, was surprisingly moderate in tone. For the most part it constituted a recapitulation of past compulsory education movements in Quebec and elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> His remarks were, moreover, "sans acrimonie, sans aigreur...", thus belying Perrier's fears. There was "aucune indécatesse d'expression."<sup>31</sup> Bouchard's assertion, however, that compulsory education would have been passed earlier, had it been defused

28. Le Soleil, 28 décembre 1942. Eugène L'Heureux had earlier, without naming Bouchard, warned him to steer clear of any compulsory education agitation in the 1940's: "Si les tenants de la fréquentation obligatoire veulent l'emporter, ils doivent imposer le silence ou, du moins, une certaine discrétion à tous ceux qui les compromettent; ils doivent rompre avec les conspirateurs de la campagne d'il y a vingt ans et leurs maigres rejetons." L'Action Catholique, 26 juillet 1941.

29. 12 mai 1971.

30. He traced it back to Hungary... in 1114! Louis Robillard, Le Devoir's parliamentary correspondent, commented: "M. Bouchard rend hommage aux soldats de la première heure qui ont combattu pour l'école [sic] obligatoire." 5 mai 1943.

31. 12 mai 1971.

politically, is problematic if not contradictory. From the time of Honoré Beaugrand, the fiery rouge editor at the turn of the century, through Félix-Gabriel Marchand, Godfroy Langlois, Bouchard himself, and finally Perrier, Godbout, and Doré, the measure was a favourite project of the Liberal party's reform or progressive wing --- "la vieille marotte du groupe radical du parti libéral."<sup>32</sup>

The most significant feature of his speech is the absence of any tribute to either Perrier or Godbout.<sup>33</sup> He did, however, praise Doré for having "recherché la vérité pour la vérité elle-même, et il faut l'en féliciter."<sup>34</sup> Later, Bouchard would give Perrier only passing praise in his Mémoires.<sup>35</sup> The long-time representative of St. Hyacinthe may have felt, despite Perrier's assurances, that his long years of service to the Liberal party, particularly during the lean years from 1936 to 1939, were being ignored.<sup>36</sup> His contribution to the

32. Rumilly op. cit., vol. 14, p. 181.

33.. Perrier does not recall any such reticence on Bouchard's part.

34. La Presse, 5 mai 1943.

35. In his Mémoires (Montréal, Beauchemin, 3 vols., 1960, p. 120) Bouchard refers to Perrier only as "un brillant avocat de Montréal..." Furthermore, I found no mention of Perrier in Bouchard's speech in the newspaper accounts examined. Yet Perrier emphatically denies that either he or Bouchard enjoyed anything but the clearest understanding on the presentation of the bill. The impression however remains that Bouchard 'damned Perrier with faint praise.'

36. Bouchard had been a candidate for the Liberal party leadership in June, 1938, but had withdrawn in the interest of party unity prior to balloting. See Godbout's tribute to him in L'Action Catholique, 11 juin 1938.

passage of compulsory education in 1943 is best expressed in his Mémoires when he described his spadework of 1912-1919 as having "inspired" in the minds of many ecclesiastical figures "des vues plus rationnelles au sujet de cette mesure, ce qui rendit son application possible dans notre province." 37

Of the numerous speeches delivered by Liberal backbenchers in the course of the debate, the most coherent exposé of the proposed measure was offered by Fernand Choquette. The measure, he said, raised three fundamental issues: pedagogical, religious, and politico-social. The leading educational authorities of the Province, including Victor Doré and the Catholic Committee, favoured it. Catholic doctrine, noted the member for Montmagny, was no longer opposed to the measure, as the Catholic Committee had recognized. Finally, the bill was "indispensable au progrès social de notre peuple." It promoted aims useful to society including a person's ability to earn a living and the inculcation of civic virtues. 38

Perrier's bill enjoyed a limited degree of by-partisan support: Jonathan Robinson and Dr. Camille Pouliot of the Union Nationale, and the Independent René Chaloult, a former Liberal. Not surprisingly, their enthusiasm was less than contagious, although Robinson shared Perrier's opinions to a

37. Bouchard, Mémoires, vol. 3, p. 59. M.A. Gagnon, Jean-Charles Harvey, Précurseur de la Révolution Tranquille, Montréal, Beauchemin, 1970, p. 119, gives great prominence to Bouchard's speech, saying that compulsory education was adopted "... à la suite d'un magistral discours de ... T.D. Bouchard."

38. La Presse, 5 mai 1943.

greater extent than the other two.

Robinson, the Union Nationale's leading English-speaking representative since the appointment of former Provincial Treasurer Martin Fisher to the Legislative Council in September, 1939, urged the government, as did other members of his party, to aid parents and overburdened school boards. His declaration that "le problème de l'éducation ne sera réellement réglée que lorsque les parents s'y seraient intéressés" significantly parallels, nevertheless, Perrier's belief that persuasion was no longer effective as a guarantee of adequate attendance. All too often, pointed out Robinson, parents wrongly blamed teachers for lack of progress in education. Education, he said, was the only heritage the poor could bequeath to their offspring.<sup>39</sup>

Dr. Pouliot, the member for Gaspé-Sud, made clear his support for the measure was dictated by the fifty percent dropout rate in the elementary schools of his riding. He did not, however, feel that the abolition of tuition fees would make any significant difference in overcoming the poverty of the area.<sup>40</sup>

The government's measure also won the reluctant support of René Chaloult. His support for this principle dated

39. La Presse, 30 avril 1943. It should be noted that both Gagnon and Pouliot voted for women's suffrage in the session of 1940, despite the Union Nationale's opposition to the bill. Robinson abstained on this vote. 12 mai 1971.

40. La Presse, 30 avril and 7 mai 1943. See Rapport du Surintendant..., 1935-36, pp. 166-169, for a report from the Inspector of the area's schools.

back a number of years.<sup>41</sup> His reasons for backing Perrier's bill nevertheless remained obfuscated by a torrent of nationalistic rhetoric. He proceeded to illustrate, in the painful philosophical dialectic that was his wont, his view that the causes of school absenteeism were inescapably the result of familial poverty. Only a few parents were negligent in their duty towards their children's education. On the other hand, he claimed, where the Marsh Report<sup>42</sup> had calculated that the income of a Canadian family of five should be \$1,134.38 per annum, some 33.4% of Canadian workers earned less than \$1,000; 33.2% of rural families disposed of less than \$500.00 per annum.<sup>43</sup> Chaloult thus disagreed with Perrier's belief that parental apathy was the main stumbling-block to overcome.<sup>44</sup> Yet he supported the bill -- although he was absent for the vote on second reading like Robinson --

41. René Chaloult, Mémoires Politiques, Montréal, Editions du Jour, 1969, p. 137. The Bloc populaire canadien, to which Chaloult was sympathetic, if not loosely linked, adopted an equally vague viewpoint: "le Bloc populaire canadien considère qu'il faut s'appliquer non seulement à enrichir les intelligences, c'est-à-dire à instruire, mais aussi et surtout à former le coeur, la volonté, le caractère de l'enfant..." Philippe Hamel in L'Action Catholique, 3 janvier 1944.
42. L.C. Marsh, Report on Social Security for Canada, Committee on Reconstruction, 1943. For commentary and criticism see: Emile Boucher, S.J., De Beveridge à Marsh, in Relations, avril, 1943, pp. 29-31; \_\_\_\_\_, Accepterons-nous le Plan Marsh?, in Relations, juin, 1943, pp. 47-49.
43. My source for these debates is to be found in the newspapers of the time, and these do not distinguish whether the term "canadiens" referred to French-Canadians or Canadians as a whole.
44. La Presse, 30 avril 1943.

on the grounds that, though faulty, it was better than a policy of inaction.

Proponents of compulsory education believed legal methods had to supplant persuasion as a means of obtaining satisfactory levels of primary school attendance. Their task was facilitated, of course, by the knowledge that the highest educational and religious authorities in Quebec favoured the principle of compulsory education. The Honorable Maurice Duplessis' Union Nationale, the official Opposition, came out against the bill but in doing so managed to ignore its basic premise -- that compulsory education was a stimulus to make parents more aware of the necessity to act in a responsible manner toward their children's education. Opposition spokesmen accordingly avoided, in the main, any criticism of Perrier's bill on doctrinal or statistical grounds -- which implied an acceptance of his statistics. They instead concentrated on the peripheral issue of the supposed financial inequities imposed on school boards by the new legislation. Consequently, at no time during the debate were the bases of the compulsory education bill ever seriously called into question. To a much lesser extent, the Opposition also exploited the emotional issue of penal sanctions against recalcitrant parents entailed in the measure, although here again the Catholic Committee's acceptance of this relatively minor feature of compulsory education precluded any meaningful criticism.

The former Minister of Mines in the Duplessis government and veteran of federal politics, Honorable Onésime Gagnon, delivered the Union Nationale's opening salvo against the compulsory education proposal in a speech mordantly (and accurately) described by one Liberal backbencher as "fifty years out of date."<sup>45</sup> Gagnon offered the unsubstantiated and untenable observation that methods of persuasion had produced acceptable levels of attendance in the Province's elementary schools, and that compulsory education had failed everywhere it was in force. Only 1.17% of Quebec's eligible students did not attend school, and the Province had a lower illiteracy rate than certain other parts of Canada.<sup>46</sup> The very paucity of these statistics, and their dubious authenticity, is eloquent testimony to the Opposition's inability

45. Alexis Caron (L., Hull), La Presse, 28 avril 1943. Perrier added: "... il est resté moyenâgeux." In the same interview, Perrier records his surprise at the choice of Gagnon as the principal speaker against compulsory education.

46. La Presse, 28 avril 1943. In its edition of June, 1941, Relations quoted with evident pleasure (p. 238) a highly unfavourable report on the Nova Scotia school system: "The Nova Scotia School system is so rotten it is falling to bits... The inequality of opportunity for students in this province is simply appalling... In some communities ... the children of school age do not have a dog's chance... We should draft a general resolution covering the whole educational situation in Nova Scotia which is rotten from top to bottom and in need of drastic reforms..." Relations added its own postscript: "Cette vigoureuse dénonciation du système scolaire néo-écossais consolera le vieux Québec à qui d'aucuns voudraient faire croire que, au-delà de ses frontières, tout en éducation va comme dans le meilleur des mondes!"

to attack the bill on these grounds. Perrier hoped to solve "with a stroke of the pen" the vast differences between the partisans of compulsion and those who favoured the retention of the traditional methods of persuasion. Had not eminent educators and public officials in Quebec opposed its enactment -- including Sir Thomas Chapais, Sir Lomer Gouin, Alexandre Taschereau, and C.J. Magnan?<sup>47</sup>

Compulsory education sought to "mettre la charrue devant les boeufs," in ignoring the more fundamental educational problems, concluded Gagnon: insufficient teachers' salaries and the deficits of many school boards. Let the government first of all restore the family's credit and formulate an economic system enabling workers, fishermen, and farmers to earn enough to send their children to school. The measure was "prématuré, inopportun et absolument inefficace." In its place, he proposed a six-point programme offering greater educational opportunities to the poor, steps to improve teachers' salaries, and construction of more schools.<sup>48</sup> Perrier's opening speech of April 15, 1943 had in fact covered

47. La Presse, 28 avril 1943. Gagnon claimed that Laurier opposed compulsory education. See, however, Hamelin, édit., Les Mémoires du Sénateur Raoul Dandurand, p. 256, for the reproduction of a letter from Sir Wilfrid, dated February 6, 1919, congratulating Dandurand on his campaign to promote compulsory education.
48. On this theme, consult the editorial of Charles-Eugène Pelletier, Embellissons nos écoles, in L'Action Catholique, 12 mai 1943.

these areas, while Gagnon's further suggestion of greater governmental aid to secondary and university education hardly falls under the purview of compulsory education, which was of course applicable in the first instance to students of elementary school age. Seconded by Antonio Elie (UN, Yamaska), Gagnon accordingly proposed that because the bill "néglige de pourvoir au règlement indispensable des difficultés financières, éducationnelles et autres qui paralysent l'action des parents et des commissions scolaires" it be amended to correct these oversights. This amendment was easily defeated, 36-14;  
49  
Chaloult on this occasion voted with the government benches.

Dr. Albiny Paquette and Paul Beaulieu were content merely to echo Gagnon's arguments against compulsory education, especially those of an economic nature. As a former Provincial Secretary, Paquette might have been expected to deliver the principal rebuttal against Perrier's proposal. He however limited himself to criticizing the government's decision to proceed with the presentation of the bill before completion of the Beaudoin inquiry.<sup>50</sup> He was, apparently, studiously ignoring the fact that Cardinal Villeneuve had urged a prompt decision on compulsory education in the Catholic Committee, so that such a law might be enacted during the

49. La Presse, 28 avril 1943. Robillard wrote in Le Devoir: "la députation s'est partagée selon les vieilles lignes de parti." 28 avril 1943.

50. As did Omer Héroux. Le Devoir, 16 décembre 1942.

1943 Legislative session.<sup>51</sup> Paquette, in addition, was one of the few to introduce the irrelevant, but highly inflammable, issue of conscription.<sup>52</sup>

There was a certain incoherence in some of the speeches against compulsory education. Ontario's measure was ineffectual, said Beaulieu; he concluded Quebec's would be as well.<sup>53</sup> Not only was this observation unsubstantiated; it contradicted Duplessis, who on third reading chided Perrier for making comparisons of attendance rates with other provinces. Gagnon's point that Quebec had made valuable strides in education during the preceding quarter-century hardly jibed with Duplessis' claims, voiced during the Terrebonne bye-election, that the Liberals had only themselves to blame for their complaints about Quebec's educational backwardness.<sup>54</sup>

Perrier's second speech during second reading, on May 4, confidently rebutted the Opposition's meagre arguments. Noting that no one had as yet refuted his statistical observations of low attendance, he produced more statistics --

51. C.F. Delâge's motion at the December 2, 1942 meeting of the Catholic Committee. (Footnote 92, chapter 2).
52. Gagnon referred to the compulsory education law as "la loi de la mobilisation." La Presse, 28 avril 1943. For a discussion of the part conscription played in Perrier's bye-election, see Bertrand, Mémoires, pp. 86-87.
53. Despite these complaints by Union Nationale speakers on the overburdening of school boards' finances, one suspects they would have opposed any centralization of these boards even if this led to decreased administrative costs.
54. La Presse, 28 avril 1943.

economic as well as pedagogical -- to support his contention that parental negligence, not poverty was the primordial factor in declining attendance rates. As to the alleged financial hiatuses of the bill, he drily remarked that "le <sup>55</sup> gouvernement ne peut tout faire à la fois." The proposed measure was not a "servile imitation" of similar statutes elsewhere; the government had drawn on "des principes directeurs qui ont servi dans le monde à régler des problèmes comme ceux auxquels on a à faire face." Both government and Opposition benches were well aware that the draft of the bill was a replica of the Vatican City's statute on compulsory education of 1929, and this fact constituted one of Perrier's major trump cards <sup>56</sup> in the debate. Compulsory education, summarized Perrier, was completely viable in Quebec:

Sans doute il se fera dans l'ombre certaine agitation. Pour tenter de faire croire qu'on avait raison, on tentera de mettre des bâtons dans les roues. Mais les difficultés passagères ne pourront entraver notre oeuvre. Nous avons l'opinion publique avec nous. La loi est applicable <sup>57</sup> et sera appliquée énergiquement.

Following his speech, the bill passed second reading.

At Perrier's request, the bill was adopted on division: "je

55. Ibid., 5 avril 1943. Chaloult gave as the source of his statistics Edouard Montpetit, a friend of Perrier's and one of the signers of the 1919 petition to Archbishop Bruchési. Perrier claims these statistics were drawn from 1932, the height of the depression. In 1943, affirms Perrier, Montpetit was as firm as ever a proponent of compulsory education. 28 janvier 1972.

56. See below, footnote 90.

57. La Presse, 5 avril 1943.

voulais marquer une ligne de démarcation." <sup>58</sup> Dr. Pouliot voted with the government, while both Robinson and Chaloult were absent. <sup>59</sup>

The relative tranquillity of the debate thus far gave way to a much less serene atmosphere when it came up for third reading, on May 6. This stage of the bill's passage was marred by a serious altercation between Premier Godbout and René Chaloult, a quarrel exacerbated by the Premier's intense personal aversion to the political maverick from Lotbinière. Perrier, Duplessis, and others <sup>'60</sup> all participated in this verbal slugfest. No new viewpoints on compulsory education were brought to light however. The rise in tempers was prompted in large part by the Union Nationale's anger at what it considered were Liberal implications that anyone opposing the bill was reactionary.

58. The usual method of procedure was by voice vote. Perrier instead had each member called by name, thus compelling him to stand and declare himself. Any break in Union Nationale ranks would be clearly exposed. Perrier was (correctly) confident of Liberal solidarity.
59. A Gallup poll on education by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (reprinted in L'Action Catholique, 8 avril 1943) reported the results of a survey on compulsory (and free) education among Quebeckers: 90% were in favour, 6% opposed, the rest undecided. The survey went on to note that previous battles for compulsory education had helped pave the way for it, and that the proportion of those in favour of the measure was virtually identical among Liberals, Union Nationale supporters, and Bloc supporters (despite the opposition of UN leader Duplessis). The same situation with respect to support of the measures was found in the cities, as well as among French-speaking and English-speaking Quebeckers.
60. Beaulieu, Langlais, Paquette, Honorable Valmore Bienvenue, and Pouliot.

Although Maurice Duplessis had not as yet taken part in the debate, the attitude of his party had been clearly expressed by Gagnon, Paquette, and Beaulieu. In part, Duplessis reiterated their charges that the compulsory education measure was financially inadequate and statistically unnecessary. Like his followers, he failed to offer any substantiation for these charges. Moreover, one of the features of the debate is the minor role Duplessis played. Yet his was the most effective speech against the bill, in its insinuation that the Liberals hastened to pass the bill out of fear of public opposition to its provisions.

Because "la plus grande partie de la population" was against the bill, he considered it "inexécutoire et inopérante." Perrier rejected this charge at this time, claiming that the majority of the Province understood the 'grandeur' of the law,<sup>61</sup> although he admitted several years later that the government was constantly moving "à contre courant" of prevailing trends on different questions.<sup>62</sup> The Union Nationale, proffered Duplessis, was ready to undertake all appropriate means for the betterment of education, but this necessitated rational procedures, not illusory reforms.

Duplessis failed to challenge the government's thesis that persuasion had failed as a means of promoting adequate

61. La Presse, 7 avril 1943.

62. 25 février 1972.

attendance. However he was the only Opposition member to force Perrier to adopt a defensive stance during the debate.<sup>63</sup> Replying to Duplessis' claim that any comparison of Quebec's school attendance rates with those of other provinces was fruitless, Perrier's assertion of Quebec's favourable position in this regard contradicts the main thrust of his speech of April 15. Duplessis, moreover, made much of the fact that Perrier was a member of the Montreal Catholic School Commission when, despite a raise in monthly tuition fees, it had still suffered a deficit. While Perrier adequately acquitted himself of the accusation -- saying that it had been dictated by the prevailing economic situation and that he had favoured its removal as soon as possible --<sup>64</sup> the charge was nevertheless politically telling.

Underneath the political jousting surrounding debate -- apt, in this sense, is Rumilly's aphorism that "Bouchard et Duplessis... respirent dans la politique comme des poissons

63. Perrier and Duplessis continually engaged in sparring in the Legislature. On one occasion, Duplessis complained of a number of incompetent teachers in the Trois-Rivières' technical school, thus causing 27 students to leave. Perrier retorted that their parents were perhaps Union Nationale and hence, like their leader, unaware of the importance of education. La Presse, 6 mars 1943.
64. Perrier said he had always opposed the CECM monthly tuition fee. Cf. Le Canada for the details of this matter (8 septembre 1941, p. 12, col. 1-2). See also: Procès-verbal de la Commission Administrative de la Commission des Ecoles Catholiques de Montréal, réunion du 8 avril 1934; Procès-verbal du Comité des finances de la Commission Administrative de la Commission des Ecoles Catholiques de Montréal, réunion du 20 mai 1935.

dans l'eau" <sup>65</sup> -- one detects in Duplessis' attitude a fundamental conservatism in matters of education. <sup>66</sup> This is especially so in the way he and his followers handled the potentially explosive issue of the hierarchy's approval of compulsory education. Thus while Perrier was correct in believing that the Catholic Committee's recommendation of this principle would render criticism of the bill on doctrinal grounds very difficult to sustain, such criticisms were not impossible.

Duplessis regretted that "des hommes publics, de bonne foi probablement" -- including, he broadly intimated, Hector Perrier <sup>67</sup> -- nurtured the belief that the French-Canadians were jealous of their "Anglo-Saxon fellow citizens." <sup>68</sup> He professed to believe that "l'éducation produira ses fruits dans la mesure que [sic] l'élève aura le sentiment de la compléter par son effort individuel." <sup>69</sup> Such an outlook on Duplessis' part would indicate a satisfaction with present methods of procuring acceptable rates of attendance, or simply a refusal to investigate a matter which lay most properly, in his eyes, in the hands of the parents. "Je déclare

65. Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol. 36, p. 49.

66. 28 janvier 1972.

67. La Presse, 16 mai 1941.

68. Ibid., 7 mai 1943.

69. Ibid., 16 mai 1941.

que l'éducation ne relève ni des gouvernements ni des politiciens, mais des parents et du clergé. L'éducation n'est pas l'affaire de l'Etat."<sup>70</sup> It will be recalled that in the Terrebonne bye-election he had labelled Liberal plans for educational reform as anticlerical in intent.<sup>71</sup>

Duplessis' hesitancy to embark on educational reform is most evident in his angry reaction to Liberal charges that he was ignoring the Catholic Committee's recommendation of December 17, 1942 in favour of compulsory education. "Ceux... qui invoquent l'autorité du cardinal et celle des encycliques sont ceux-là même qui pendant toute leur carrière publique, ont foulé aux pieds ces documents augustes." The decision of the Catholic Committee to support the principle of compulsory education "dans les conditions bien définies" did not obviate the fact that there were "également des opinions respectables contre. C'est dire que le principe sortira des divergences d'opinion qu'il faut respecter."<sup>72</sup> Unlike Le Devoir, however, the Leader of the Opposition did not cast any doubt, at least publicly, on the qualifications of the Committee to

70. Ibid., 7 avril 1943. Also Ibid., 17 mai 1944: "Ce qu'il faut, c'est revenir à la vie familiale d'autrefois, qu'on tend d'ailleurs à oublier un peu."

71. Le Canada bitterly attacked Duplessis for this accusation: Pourquoi M. Duplessis met-il le clergé en cause? 27 novembre 1940.

72. Le Canada, 7 mai 1943. See, however, Chaloult's not so favourable account of Duplessis' attitude toward the clergé in Mémoires Politiques, pp. 52-54.

pass judgment on compulsory education. <sup>73</sup>

Other Opposition speakers followed his cue in treating the Episcopacy's approval of compulsory education very gingerly. Paul Beaulieu merely noted, without any elaboration, that some Bishops opposed its implementation.<sup>74</sup> (His own was in favour).<sup>75</sup> Gagnon accused the government of "camouflaging" its "machiavellian intentions" in entitling the legislation "instruction obligatoire" or "fréquentation scolaire obligatoire." The "majority" of the Bishops approved it, a fact which was sufficient to overcome his "répugnance."<sup>76</sup>

On May 6th, Premier Godbout introduced third reading. It had been planned that the Premier's considerable personal prestige would give a decorous close to so important

73. Chaloult, op. cit., p. 114. On an earlier occasion in the Assembly, he had remarked that he was not firmly convinced of the Bishops' competence to sit on the Catholic Committee. In effect he accused them of acting as if "... leur consécration les métamorphosait de droit divin en éducateurs..." There was no adverse reaction among the Bishops to this, he reported. Bouchard commented to Chaloult afterwards: "Et si c'était moi qui parlais ainsi..." Rumilly wrote that Chaloult enjoyed the confidence of the clergy. op. cit., vol. 39, pp. 47-48.

74. Ibid., 5 mai 1943.

75. His Bishop was Anastase Forget.

76. La Presse, 28 avril 1943.

a debate.<sup>77</sup> He failed. He did not succeed in matching Duplessis's repartee, and he let himself be led into one of the most violent scenes ever to take place in the Quebec Legislature. Even though there was no doubt the measure would finally be enacted, Godbout's angry exchanges with Chaloult and Duplessis failed to consolidate the edifying atmosphere the Liberals hoped to surround the compulsory education debate with. It was Godbout, not Bouchard as Perrier had feared, who compromised the tone of debate.

Godbout said his government placed a high value on educational reform, and on compulsory education in particular. The Liberals did not intend to allow "quelques individus gâcher l'avenir." The educational budget had been increased by 100% in 1939; if necessary, stated the Minister of Agriculture, the government would abandon some of its agricultural endeavours in order to fulfil its responsibilities:

77. Even Chaloult had earlier praised Godbout's urbanity. "Parfait gentilhomme, il saura maintenir l'ordre dans cette Chambre, et rendre à la province sa bonne réputation d'autrefois. Homme de parole, il a manifesté à mon égard une parfaite loyauté dont je m'en voudrais de ne pas reconnaître publiquement." Chaloult says he and Philippe Hamel (a co-founder of the Action Libérale Nationale) returned to Liberal ranks after 1939 because of Godbout. In his Mémoires Politiques, Chaloult paid him the following tribute: "J'avoue que, dans l'ensemble, je trouvais le parti libéral et son chef plus civilisé que l'Union nationale et le sien. N'eusse été de la guerre et ses conséquences, j'aurais cherché à m'intégrer à ce groupement..." pp. 78-79.

Nous nous ferons battre si nécessaire, mais nous préparerons une génération plus instruite de ses devoirs... Je n'ai pas l'habitude de faire de promesses, mais j'en ai fait une: celle de faire mon devoir. La voie droite pour nous, c'est celle qui nous permettra de nous qualifier<sup>78</sup> mieux que nos concurrents.

The vigorous exchanges that had marked this last day of debate continued. In particular, Perrier and the<sup>79</sup> Honorable Valmore Bienvenue, for the Liberals, and Duplessis, Beaulieu, and Paquette for the Opposition, were involved in partisans repartee which only served to heighten tension in the Assembly.

When debate resumed after evening recess on May 6, René Chaloult goaded Godbout for his servility to the federal government's conduct of the war: he suggested the Premier ought to "prêcher la fierté nationale et non l'infériorité<sup>80</sup> des nôtres." Trembling with anger, Godbout left his seat, advanced to the middle of the floor opposite Chaloult's desk, and launched a strong personal attack on the nationalist orator, in terms described as "déclarations serviles et

78. La Presse, 7 mai 1943. During the Terrebonne campaign Perrier had referred to "un autre homme, vivant paisiblement sur la terre, qui avait laissé cette vie de tout repos pour servir sa province." Le Canada, 18 octobre 1940.

79. Le Carnet du grincheux attacked Bienvenue in the following manner: "Comme sauront dire un tas de Canayens, une fois que l'école [sic] obligatoire et gratuite leur aura permis d'apprendre l'anglais: 'Nevermore, nevermore, Valmore.'" Le Devoir, 5 mai 1943.

80. La Presse, 7 mai 1943.

injures gratuites.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the only note of levity was contributed by the inimitable Maurice Duplessis, who asked if the Bloc Populaire and the Liberals were conspiring to prevent passage of the bill!<sup>82</sup>

After these sobering incidents, the lateness of the hour and the fatigue of the participants brought debate to a close.<sup>83</sup> Antonio Barrette (UN, Joliette) moved to send the bill to Committee of the Whole for further study to amend it "de façon à rendre justice aux familles pauvres et à venir en aide aux commissions scolaires, aux professeurs et aux contribuables." This amendment was defeated 29-12, Chaloult supporting the Opposition ploy. The main motion

81. Robillard in Le Devoir, 7 mai 1943.

82. La Presse, 7 mai 1943. Chaloult mentions this incident only briefly in his Mémoires Politiques, pp. 137-139. Duplessis added, for the record, that no such conspiracy existed between the Union Nationale and the Bloc. Robillard in Le Devoir, 7 mai 1943, also claimed that Godbout was angered by Chaloult's mention of a recent speech by Archbishop Charbonneau of Montréal (reported in Le Canada, 30 avril 1943) before the Montreal Jeune Chambre de Commerce: "Une société catholique doit se donner des institutions catholiques; elle doit se donner des dirigeants qui reflètent ses intérêts religieux, et il me semble que nous avons beaucoup à faire pour nous donner des chefs qui expriment notre sentiment national."

83. There was one later echo of compulsory education in the Legislature during the 1943 session. On May 18, Godbout congratulated Onésime Gagnon on his sons' fine academic performance at the Laval University law school: "Comme tous les parents ne sont pas comme le député de Matane," he added, "il devenait nécessaire de passer cette loi pour les autres. J'espère que cette mesure sera supportée par les distingués fils de mon honorable collègue." Gagnon retorted that his sons' success proved the law was unnecessary. La Presse, 19 mai 1943.

was then moved and passed 30-11, Chaloult voting in its favour. 84

The final hurdle before royal sanction was the Legislative Council, where the Liberals enjoyed a comfortable majority. There on May 20, the final vote in favour of the measure was 15-0. The only serious opposition came from the veteran Conservative Legislative Councillor Sir Thomas Chapais, who abstained on the final vote. 85

Chapais, who had been instrumental in the defeat of the Marchand government's bill to establish a Department of Education in 1897, again rose to the fore. His opposition to any form of significant State intervention in education had not altered; he had, in fact, informed the Catholic Committee, at its first meeting after the approval of compulsory education that, had he been present at that meeting, he would have voted against the recommendation. 86 Nevertheless, in the Legislative Council, he complimented Perrier for his presentation of a long-standing question "in such a way as to command respect." 87 The decade-long depression and the

84. Ibid., 7 mai 1943.

85. Appointed to the Legislative Council on March 18, 1892, Chapais had recently celebrated another milestone in his public career -- his fiftieth anniversary as a member of the Catholic Committee. Procès-verbal..., réunion du 2 décembre 1942, pp. 5-6.

86. He was attending the funeral of Senator Georges Parent, Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol. 40, p. 103.

87. At a later meeting of the Catholic Committee, a motion presented by Cardinal Villeneuve and seconded by Sir Thomas Chapais congratulated Provincial Secretary Perrier and Superintendent Doré for their efforts to update the educational system without neglecting traditional tenets. Procès-verbal..., réunion du 15 décembre 1943, pp. 25-26.

onslaught of the war were the major factors behind poor attendance, in his view; once these causes were eliminated, the situation would return to normal.<sup>88</sup> This outlook was in fact shared by Victor Doré, who on one occasion had written that the slight decrease in enrollment in 1942-43 was attributable to "a considerable number" of primary school students having left school to work in commercial establishments, and war industries. The end of the war, he felt, would reverse this situation.<sup>89</sup> Chapais' speech failed to influence the Legislative Council, and on May 20, 1943, the government's bill to establish compulsory education was given final approval.

\* \* \*

The passage of the Godbout government's bill establishing compulsory education was given royal assent on June 23, 1943. During its passage through both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council it had run into no serious opposition. Some interesting observations can be postulated in this regard.

Firstly, the bill's easy passage was due less to the Liberal's majority in both Chambers than to the prior consent of the Catholic Committee for the principle of compulsory education. The government's proposed measure carefully adhered to the Committee's guidelines; indeed, the bill drafted

88. La Presse, 21 mai 1943.

89. Rapport du Surintendant .... 1942-43, p. viii.

for presentation to the Assembly was a replica of the Vatican City's compulsory education measure of 1929.<sup>90</sup> Secondly, and equally noteworthy, is the Opposition's failure to question the statistics on which the bill was predicated. Again, to have cast on their veracity would have implicitly cast equal doubt on the Catholic Committee's judgment, since the latter's decision to support compulsory education was based at least partly on Father Beaudoin's bleak statistical report.

90. Abbé Armand Perrier, La Charte de l'Education Chrétienne, dans Revue Dominicaine, mars, 1930, pp. 147-165. Abbé Perrier provided his brother with the draft of the Vatican City law, which served as the model for the compulsory education law of 1943.

## Chapter Four

Newspaper Opinion in Montreal and Quebec  
on Hector Perrier and on Compulsory  
Education, 1940-1943

The belief that public opinion in the Province of Quebec was opposed to the passage of compulsory education statute constituted one of the Union Nationale's principal arguments against the bill. Yet the government had little difficulty rebutting the Opposition's objections. An examination of six French-language, metropolitan daily newspapers -- three published in Montreal, three in Quebec -- reveals that all but one supported, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the government's attempts to improve attendance rates through the passage of compulsory education. As was the case with Opposition criticism in the Legislature, the Catholic Committee's initiative of December 17, 1942 forced any criticism from the fourth estate to centre on the alleged financial inequities of the proposal. Particularly noteworthy was the active support given to the Perrier bill by the ecclesiastically-inspired L'Action Catholique.

After Perrier's election to the Legislature in November, 1940, the question of the Godbout government's intentions in regard to compulsory education drew ever increasing attention from the Province's newspapers. The Provincial Secretary's clear statements in favour of educational progress and reform during the Terrebonne bye-election; his address to the Catholic Committee on December 11, 1940; and his speech in the Assembly deploring declining school attendance on April 23-24, 1941 all attracted greater attention from journalists.

Accordingly, the decision of the Catholic Committee to sanction compulsory education on December 17, 1942 not

surprisingly led many of these same observers to correctly assume that the government would not be far behind in proposing a measure incorporating this recommendation. This interest remained strong throughout the debates on Perrier's bill during the 1943 session.

Liberal organs Le Canada of Montreal and Le Soleil of Quebec welcomed the bill as further proof of the Godbout government's wisdom and acumen. The nominally Conservative L'Événement-Journal of Quebec backed the bill equally enthusiastically but also viewed its passage as testimony to Perrier's influential position in the Cabinet. The less militantly Liberal La Presse of Montreal looked on the measure as a personal triumph for Perrier in his campaign to modernize education, and as additional proof of the Catholic Committee's vital role in the educational system serving the Province's Catholic population.

The independent L'Action Catholique, under the editorship of Eugène L'Heureux, gave strong support to the cause of Catholic education in general, and to the recommendations of the Catholic Committee in particular. Like Cardinal Villeneuve and the majority of the Bishops, it viewed the bill as a means to awaken public sensitivity to the value of education. As the spokesman for the Cardinal of Quebec, the consistent confidence manifested by the newspaper towards Perrier and the government in the matter of compulsory education was an appreciable source of support.

Le Devoir, the nationalist daily of Montreal, was the

only major newspaper to oppose passage of the measure. It seemed to rely on the opinion of its educational critic, Omer Héroux, a son-in-law of Jules-Paul Tardivel. He believed that the measure failed to recognize that poverty was the most important factor behind the declining attendance rates in the Province's Catholic elementary schools. He did, however, decry the alarming drop in attendance, and did not question the validity of Perrier's statistics in this regard.

Only two newspapers had the temerity to question the qualifications of the Catholic Committee in proposing compulsory education -- Le Devoir and the small but ferociously Liberal L'Autorité<sup>1</sup> of Montreal. Of the six major newspapers surveyed, all but Le Devoir relied on editorials to convey their opinion. It instead vented its sarcasm on Perrier, Godbout, and the Liberal party through the "Carner du Grincheux", a daily column, signed only by the unidentified "Le Grincheux". In addition, particularly during the period from March to June, 1943, Le Devoir continued its often petulant opposition to compulsory education through three letters - one of them unsigned - to the editor. All newspapers were united on one basic theme: that whatever the political cost, the Godbout government was determined to carry out its programme of educational reform, of which compulsory

1. L'Autorité, 21 janvier 1943. It wished the Catholic Committee more active, while Le Devoir felt the Committee had overstepped its powers.

education was the linchpin. <sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, the highly partisan Le Canada echoed the views of Perrier and Godbout on virtually all major facets of educational reform. Le Canada was the first of the Province's newspapers to opt for compulsory education during the 1940-43 period. In 1941, it gave favorable coverage to the complaints of the outgoing President of the Montreal Catholic School Commission, C.E. Gravel, that too many children were leaving school before completion of the elementary school course of study. Election of the Godbout government in 1939, and the appointment of Hector Perrier as Provincial Secretary in 1940, added Le Canada, had given impetus to the compulsory education movement. Many of the signatories of the 1919 petition presented to Archbishop Bruchési on behalf of compulsory education were still alive; would they live to see their hopes realized? <sup>3</sup>

Le Canada reported Gravel's contention that Perrier was a firm believer in compulsory education -- a revelation that, in view of the Catholic Committee's gradual steps in

2. Vincent Lemieux, édit., Quatre Elections Provinciales au Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1969, p. 5, made an interesting comment: "Il est significatif que les deux gouvernements les plus brefs au XXe siècle au Québec soient deux gouvernements qui s'appuyaient sur les urbains."
3. Le Canada, 28 juin 1941. Yet only a few months previously, Le Canada had warned Godbout not to get ahead of the Province in his reform plans. 22 mars 1941. This June editorial brought a warning from L'Action Catholique against those who "prennent l'habitude de glisser dans leurs plaidoyers une semence de prévention à l'égard du Comité catholique..." 21 juillet 1941.

that direction, could have been interpreted as an attempt by the government to force the issue through the columns of one of its strongest supporters. Perhaps cognizant of this danger, the newspaper took pains to stress the non-revolutionary aspect of any Liberal measure in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Although rejecting L'Action Catholique's viewpoint that only specialists could pass judgment on educational matters,<sup>5</sup> Le Canada shared its opinion that enactment of compulsory education would enable religious and lay leaders to rivet popular attention on the urgent need for more sustained interest in educational problems. While the foundations of French-Canadians' schools must remain Catholic, "il est toutefois permis d'envisager les problèmes profanes d'un autre oeil qu'Hélène Boullé et le brave docteur Meilleur."<sup>6</sup>

Both Le Soleil and le Canada, as well as L'Événement-Journal, viewed elementary school attendance as being of such fundamental importance that it should not be subjected to the

4. Le Canada, 6 août 1941.
5. L'Action Catholique, 26 juillet 1941. Wrote L'Heureux: "Ceux qui ont quelque chose à dire peuvent parler sans crainte, pourvu qu'ils prennent un ton proportionné à leurs compétences et qu'ils poursuivent sincèrement et exclusivement la fin affichée."
6. Hélène Boullé was the wife of the founder of New France, Samuel de Champlain. Dr. Jean-Baptiste Meilleur was the first Superintendent of Education for the united Province of Canada, 1841-1855.

indignities of partisan debate.<sup>7</sup> Le Canada added, somewhat contradictorily, that "à chaque fois qu'il s'agit d'un énorme progrès social dans Québec, cela se devrait d'être un vote largement libéral."<sup>8</sup>

The Catholic Committee's recommendation of compulsory education, in the opinion of La Presse and L'Événement-Journal, was further evidence that it was "au courant des points les plus délicats du problème de l'instruction publique..."<sup>9</sup> Compulsory education could entail new expenses, the Quebec paper wrote, but smaller municipalities and large families would be the prime beneficiaries of the proposed changes. "C'est donc une mesure d'ordre social que M. Perrier propose aux Chambres."<sup>10</sup> The Provincial Secretary viewed the measure as a "last resort", said La Presse, and the public would see the justice of it.<sup>11</sup> La Presse, whose support for the bill was more reserved than that of other Liberal newspapers, added a warning: the "individualism"

7. Le Soleil, 28 décembre 1942; 9 mars 1943. Le Canada, 10 mai 1943. L'Événement-Journal, 9 avril 1943.

8. Le Canada, 10 mai 1943.

9. L'Événement-Journal, 18 décembre 1942.

10. Ibid., 9 avril 1943.

11. La Presse, 5 mai 1943. While Perrier had, in his speech opening the debate, declared that persuasion had failed to produce acceptable levels of attendance, it is doubtful that he considered the bill as a "pis aller," as La Presse did.

of the French-Canadians might result in a somewhat less than friendly welcome for the bill in some quarters.<sup>12</sup>

Several newspapers recognized the measure as a personal triumph for the Provincial Secretary. La Presse congratulated him on possessing sufficient experience, despite his newness to politics, to ascertain that "la bonne volonté des parents" was essential to the success of the bill. Perrier deserved the cooperation of "tous nos compatriotes éclairés."<sup>13</sup> Le Canada waxed rhapsodic over the Provincial Secretary: he was "un animateur... un homme qui sait enseigner la fortitude. De ces hommes-là, il nous faudrait davantage."<sup>14</sup> Perrier, wrote yet another eulogistic editorial, was "un orateur habile autant qu'un sage législateur" and was undoubtedly "l'un des ministres les plus utiles..."<sup>15</sup> "Voilà un ministre," raved Le Soleil in the same vein, "qui a le courage de ses convictions et qui n'a pas peur d'assumer les responsabilités de ses fonctions... L'intérêt public

12. Ibid., 27 mai 1943. Although this newspaper had called for a delay in a decision on compulsory education until after the Catholic Committee's (Père Beaudoin's) inquiry was completed (Ibid., 18 octobre 1942), it approved of the Committee's decision of December 17, 1942. Ibid., 18 décembre 1942.

13. Ibid., 27 mai 1943.

14. Le Canada, 7 octobre 1942.

15. L'Événement-Journal, 29 mai 1943.

16  
passe avant les considérations électorales." In brief, all newspapers recognized the compulsory education bill as emphatically a product of Perrier's energy and successful prosecution.

Newspaper opinion was not, however, unanimously in favour of the bill; that is, in crediting Perrier with the attainment of a long-overdue educational reform. Le Devoir, led by educational editorialist Omer Héroux, was the major dissident. His opposition to compulsory education was not predicated on an unreasoning defence of the status quo. On several occasions he urged a "campagne de propagande" to combat the desertion of elementary schools, particularly those under the jurisdiction of the Montreal Catholic School Commission. Héroux, however, held out little hope that a compulsory education law would improve this situation. "Les mères qui manquent à leurs devoirs les plus essentiels négligeraient d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école, quelle que soit la loi." Poverty was at the root of poor attendance.<sup>18</sup>

16. Le Soleil, 29 décembre 1942. See also Jules-Edouard Prévost in L'Avenir du Nord (quoted in Le Canada, 3 septembre 1942); "... un homme dont l'activité, l'autorité, la haute compétence sauront maintenir les traditions de doctrines et de pensées qui ont toujours été celles de mon journal."

17. Le Devoir, 7 janvier 1941.

18. Ibid., 19 août 1941. For a discussion of poverty as a factor in poor attendance, see: Arthur Dubois, S.J., La Fréquentation scolaire obligatoire, in Relations, juillet, 1941, pp. 172-174.

He singled out the increased employment opportunities since the outbreak of war, the higher cost of living,<sup>19</sup> and the "vice antifamilial"<sup>20</sup> of working mothers being forced to leave their younger children in the care of older siblings as the prime factors in early school departure by children of both sexes. The problem was particularly urgent in large urban centres such as Montreal, where an inquiry into declining attendance carried out by the Jeunesse Etudiante Catholique<sup>21</sup> had reported that over 50% of dropouts replying to its questionnaire had blamed the early abandonment of their studies on family poverty. The problem was less acute in rural areas, he felt, where farm labour was important. He did suggest, on one occasion, that the presence of too many feminine teachers in rural schools, itself the result of exiguous salaries, caused male students to lose interest in the classroom.<sup>22</sup>

The elimination of poverty must predate any compulsory education law, Héroux felt.<sup>23</sup> The Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique of Montreal deserved credit for their campaign

19. Le Devoir, 19 août 1941.

20. Ibid., 27 novembre 1942.

21. Loc. cit.

22. Ibid., 7 janvier 1941. See also the Rapport du Surintendant..., 1940-41, p. xiii: "For many reasons, feminine discipline is no longer able to cope..."

23. Dubois, art. cit., p. 174: "Or ce serait faire un beau rêve que de décréter pour les nôtres 'un certain degré de culture morale et intellectuelle' et de les laisser matériellement incapables d'y atteindre."

to convince parents and students of the value of education. However both they and the Montreal Catholic School Commission erred in recommending such a "simplistic solution"<sup>24</sup> as compulsory education. No step in this direction should in any case be contemplated before the completion of the Catholic Committee-sanctioned Beaudoin report into attendance rates. Following this, a congress should be held to determine the best course to follow in a measure which, after all, would "bouleverser de fond en comble notre régime scolaire." This proposal reveals Héroux' mistrust of political parties; and his reluctance to leave the decision on compulsory attendance to "un corps quelconque" betrays an oblique lack of confidence in the Catholic Committee."<sup>25</sup>

To attack the Committee, and by implication the Episcopacy, in its editorial columns would expose Le Devoir to another serious reprimand from the religious authorities such as the one it had recently received from Cardinal Villeneuve.<sup>26</sup> Le Devoir chose, instead, during the session of

24. Le Devoir, 16 décembre 1942. The Jocistes however sent a brief to the Catholic Committee asking it "de ne pas s'engager pour servir d'appui du gouvernement dans une question aussi complexe et lourde de conséquences que celle de la scolarité obligatoire." Procès-verbal..., 17 décembre 1942, p. 6.
25. Le Devoir, 16 décembre 1942. See also the three letters sent to Le Devoir on the subject of compulsory education, footnotes 28 to 35.
26. Le Canada, 11 novembre 1942. Le Devoir's Quebec correspondent Léopold Richer had criticized L'Action Catholique for not supporting the Bloc populaire canadien. Cardinal Villeneuve replied that the Bishops determined the orientation of the newspaper and that any complaints should be addressed to them. This was not the first time, added Villeneuve, that Richer had committed "pareille impertinence" and next time, if he wished "à tout prix continuer, il saura à qui il s'adressera."

1943, to mask its opposition to compulsory education through three lengthy letters to the editors, one of which was unsigned.

It is not possible to determine whether these letters were ghost-written, or even actively solicited. The absence, however, of any editorial objection to their often shrill tone leaves little doubt that the newspaper endorsed their sentiments. Indeed, the only such instance was to deny that the newspaper supported compulsory education legislation.<sup>27</sup> Héroux, for instance, remained silent when one writer attacked the Catholic Committee in no uncertain terms:

Il est un procédé facile de chloroformer l'opinion publique en lui représentant la compétence du Conseil de l'Instruction publique comme un oreiller de plumes sur laquelle il est réconfortant de se reposer.<sup>28</sup>

An unsigned letter on May 4 -- the day of the vote in the Legislative Assembly on second reading -- exhumed the arguments rejected by the Cardinal and the majority of the Episcopacy: that "l'école obligatoire" led inexorably to neutral schools. Parental negligence was best remedied by creation of an unspecified body of 'qualified' educators. Those who favoured the bill -- the author presumably included the Catholic Committee -- were denounced as "les tenants

27. 12 mars 1943.

28. Ibid., F.B. Malhys, the writer, claimed a special competence in matters of education as a result of his participation on the Gouin Commission charged with reorganizing the Montreal Catholic School Commission. He was not, however, one of its actual participants, but only an interested spectator. La Riposte, 30 septembre 1927, 9 octobre 1927.

de l'Etat paternaliste, les socialisants, les communisants,  
les Harveyistes, et tous les crétins du même acabit." The  
anonymous correspondent modestly described himself as among  
those who "... possédant une juste notion des choses, entre-  
voient tous les malheurs que peut nous attirer une mesure  
si hâtivement conçue et réalisée sans préparation d'opinion."<sup>30</sup>

The sentiments in this letter, like those contained  
in the "A.C.P.F." missive, indicate that a number of people  
continued to view compulsory education in much the same  
light as the intransigent opponents of the 1912-1919 era.<sup>32</sup>  
This reaction was provoked by a fear of any changes that  
would loosen the fabric of French-Canadian society, and  
perhaps result in the implantation of 'foreign' values and  
attitudes. Its passage in 1943 was accordingly viewed as an  
attempt to institute "l'école obligatoire" when in fact God-  
bout's Liberal government planned no such step, as the Catholic

29. This is one of the few references to Jean-Charles Harvey encountered in our research -- through both newspaper and secondary sources. L'Autorité (21 avril 1943) attacked Héroux as "le crétin crétinissant du Devoir." On the same day it attacked the Catholic Committee, saying that so long as it remained as it was presently constituted "aucune réforme d'envergure ne sera réalisée..." L'Autorité's strident tomes remind one of Rumilly's tirade against Perrier and Godbout: "L'élément radical qui au Québec domine les unions internationales inspire Le Jour et, de T.D. Bouchard Hector Perrier, conduit le parti libéral, cet élément radical est devenu anglophile (voire anglomane), centralisateur et, sans doute, secrètement assimilateur." (Histoire de la Province de Québec, vol 39., p. 9)

30. Le Devoir, 5 mai 1943.

31. See Appendix "A".

32. Chapter one, footnote 25.

Committee had explicitly recognized.

A third correspondent, J. H. Bender, took up Dr. Albiny Paquette's charge that the bill was ill-advised, coming at a time when the federal government's policy of conscription was emptying the Province of farm labour.<sup>33</sup> It is not inconceivable that Le Devoir's mistrust of political parties, in particular the Liberals, would lead it to adopt this rather extreme viewpoint.<sup>34</sup> It was "illogical", wrote Bender in a tone reminiscent of Father Hermas Lalande in 1919, "to compel less endowed students" to attend school. Not only might this run counter to their, and their parents', interests, but they might occupy valuable classroom space rightfully belonging to more promising students.<sup>35</sup>

Through the "Carnet du Grincheux" Le Devoir was able to indulge in often bitter personal attacks on the Liberal party and the Godbout Cabinet,<sup>36</sup> in a manner perhaps considered

33. Godbout denied this. La Presse, 7 mai 1943.

34. Le Devoir, 27 janvier 1943. "La solidarité libérale ne repose guère que sur une communauté d'intérêts électoraux et mesquins. Le parti libéral, comme d'ailleurs le parti conservateur, n'est autre chose qu'une petite "république des camarades." Il n'existe aucune unité doctrinale entre le parti libéral fédéral et le parti libéral québécois."

35. Ibid., 19 juin 1943. Le Devoir echoed similar sentiments in its "page féminine", edited by Germaine Bernier. Ibid., 5 juillet 1943. Le Nouvelliste, 14 mai 1941, blamed the students themselves for some of the problems facing the school system, despite its belief that "nos jeunes, règle générale, sont mieux doués que leurs concurrents d'autres races."

36. Yet on June 13, 1938, the newspaper had carried a very flattering article on Godbout.

unbecoming to editors of sober mien and olympian probity like Georges Pelletier and Omer Héroux.<sup>37</sup> This contrasted with the almost unbroken editorial silence on the feasibility of compulsory education.

During the debate on second reading in the Assembly, "le Grincheux" described Perrier as attempting, through compulsory education, "d'inculquer à tous les grands principes du parti qui n'en a pas."<sup>38</sup> Noting the Provincial Secretary's attack on the "éteignors" who opposed the bill in a particularly reactionary way, he wondered if "le ministre de l'Instruction obligatoire et de la Conscription et des Beaux-Arts"<sup>40</sup> included Sir Lomer Gouin, Alexandre Taschereau, and Mgr. L.A. Paquet in this group. "Avant de verser son \$500 comme gouverneur de l'Institut démocratique, un lecteur nous demande de laquelle des quatre libertés bouchardiennes relève l'instruction obligatoire..."<sup>41</sup> These and similar slings left no doubt as to the paper's jaundiced

37. Both of whom Chaloult referred to as being among "les chefs des Canadiens-français." La Presse, 7 mai 1943.

38. Le Devoir, 5 mai 1943.

39. For the text of this speech before the Club de Réforme de Montréal, see Le Devoir, 27 mai 1943.

40. Ibid., 29 mai 1943. Le Canada (14 novembre 1942) had earlier inadvertently referred to Perrier's wife as "l'épouse du ministère de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts."

41. Le Devoir, 1 juin 1943.

outlook on Perrier's project of law. <sup>42</sup>

The hierarchy's approval of compulsory education, based on the revelations of the Beaudoin report, was of crucial importance to the success of Perrier's measure. It is therefore instructive and enlightening to examine the stand assumed by the organ of the Archbishop of Quebec, L'Action Catholique, both prior to and during the debates surrounding compulsory education.

Its official editorial policy, as enunciated by Editor-in-Chief Eugène L'Heureux, was to consider the government's measure an important step in overcoming parental irresponsibility toward the school and the teacher.<sup>43</sup> The newspaper therefore endorsed the degree of State intervention entailed in compulsory education in an area previously closed to the State. This fundamental shift in policy, if one looks back to the L'Action Sociale Catholique in the 1912-19 period, not surprisingly parallels that undergone by the Catholic

42. Héroux persisted, for example, in referring to "l'école obligatoire", after the leading educational authorities of the Province, both religious and lay, had clearly differentiated between "école obligatoire" and "fréquentation obligatoire." Eg. Cardinal Villeneuve and Victor Doré at the December 17, 1942 meeting of the Catholic Committee.
43. His fellow editorialist Louis-Philippe Roy dissented to some extent. He viewed poverty as the main culprit in poor attendance. Nevertheless, he expressed his awareness of the need for regular attendance. L'Action Catholique, 28 août 1943.

Committee and was motivated, as in the case of the latter, by an enlightened vision of the role of the school in modern society. State intervention, while perfectly justified, would be ineffectual without positive, constructive cooperation from the parents. The support of L'Action Catholique for Hector Perrier's measure was therefore predicated on the belief that it adhered to the guidelines laid down by the Catholic Committee. <sup>44</sup>

The Bishop of Moncton, New Brunswick, Mgr. Robichaud, made some very apposite remarks on the role of the Catholic press at the time when the Catholic Committee was voting in favour of compulsory education. The primary duty of a Catholic newspaper was not simply to "inform", but to "mold" its readers. Its administration, editing, and publication were moreover carried out by lay Catholics under the direction and supervision of the hierarchy. <sup>45</sup> L'Action Catholique filled this description. Founded in 1907 to act as the mouthpiece

44. See the following L'Heureux editorials: 1937: 3 septembre, 8 septembre, 10 septembre, 13 septembre; 1938: 12 septembre; 1940: 21 octobre, 25 octobre, 19 décembre, 26 décembre, 30 décembre; 1941: 21 juillet, 28 juillet, 26 juillet, 30 juillet; 1942: 30 décembre; 1943: 26 avril, 27 avril, 30 avril.
45. Le Devoir, 14 janvier 1943. Reprinted from La Voix d'Évangéline, 20 décembre 1942.

46  
of the Cardinal of Quebec, it styled itself as "pleinement  
soumis" to the Episcopacy,

dont l'autorité est indiscutable en  
matière morale et religieuse, d'une  
part, et, par ailleurs, aussi respec-  
table pour le moins que tout autre  
dans le domaine profane, où les  
évêques poursuivent toujours les  
fins les plus généreuses avec une  
sérénité lumineuse... 47

L'Heureux differentiated between "la simple politi-  
que de parti" with which the newspaper did not concern it-  
self, and "la haute politique" with which "de par son  
statut" L'Action Catholique could, and often had to, invol-  
ve itself.<sup>48</sup> "Sa première préoccupation" had written his pre-  
decessor in 1930, "est la sauvegarde des grands principes  
qui mènent les nations à l'éternité bienheureuse... Ce se-  
rait déroger à sa mission que de s'inféoder à un parti

46. Beaulieu et Hamelin, op. cit., pp. 173-174: "Ce journal  
aura donc ce caractère particulier de n'être attaché  
à aucun parti et d'être par conséquent le journal de  
tous. Débarrassé de toute entrave, il suivra les direc-  
tions de l'Eglise... et évitera de subordonner aux vues  
et à l'intérêt des particuliers les intérêts suprêmes  
de la religion et de la patrie."

47. L'Action Catholique, 20 décembre 1942. See also Ibid.,  
23 juillet 1941.

48. Ibid., 20 décembre 1942.

politique."<sup>49</sup> An expression of opinion on different phases of the Godbout government's legislative programme did not mean a particular bias for or against the Liberal party, or indeed any other political movement. The newspaper's consistent support for Perrier's educational proposals, both during the Terrebonne bye-election campaign and afterwards, is based on this outlook.<sup>50</sup> In the same way, L'Action Catholique's praise for the general quality of speeches during the compulsory education debates in the Legislature was perfectly in accord with its earlier call for a dignified tone to the parliamentary proceedings.<sup>51</sup>

Eugène L'Heureux manifested, over a number of years, an enlightened vision of the place of the school in society. "Sans idéal," he wrote, "un peuple n'accomplit rien de grand; faute de cet accélérateur moral, il est réduit à servir les autres et à se contenter d'un rang inférieur au milieu des nations."<sup>52</sup> This was what he conceived "une éducation nationale" to be. The school was to be the instrument for "une transformation intellectuelle extraordinairement heureuse..."

49. Jules Dorion, 17 juillet 1930. Consult also l'abbé C.O. Garant, L'Eglise au Secours de la Société, Québec, L'Action Catholique, 1937, pp. 182-183.

50. L'Action Catholique, 26 avril 1943.

51. Ibid., 4 mai 1943, 22 février 1943.

52. Ibid., 8 septembre 1937.

which could only take place through the full participation of all those concerned in education -- Church, family, and the State. <sup>53</sup>

Regrettably, continued L'Heureux, only "quelques idéalistes considérés comme plus ou moins fous" reacted against "notre paresse intellectuelle qui nous empêche de donner notre plein rendement un peu dans tous les domaines." <sup>54</sup> French-Canadians were too prone to consider education as a solely utilitarian endeavour. <sup>55</sup> The school must not simply prepare the child for the future; it must teach him to interact with his religion, his race, and his family. A "pragmatic education" therefore took into account the moral as well as material realities which surrounded the child; to do otherwise would be to betray what Canon Lionel Groulx termed "nos idéaux de français et de catholiques" <sup>56</sup>

School were too often prey to "les interventions malheureuses de certains parents et de critiques aussi tenaces qu'incompétents." <sup>57</sup> There was always room for constructive criticism; all too often, however, this assumed the form of calumnies against teaching orders. Parents were too

53. Ibid., 3 septembre 1937.

54. Loc. cit.

55. 30 décembre 1940.

56. La Presse, 30 avril 1943.

57. L'Action Catholique, 13 septembre 1937.

disposed to criticize teachers in the presence of their children, while both parents and school commissioners assigned<sup>58</sup> education an inferior place whenever they underpaid teachers. Parental responsibility was not limited to the home; it must extend to the teacher in the form of "un appui constant moral..."<sup>59</sup> Parents must cease to lay blame on the school for what was all too often the result of their own disinterest, and must convince their children that assiduous attendance was vital to the continuity of the teacher's work.<sup>60</sup>

Parental associations were permissible so long as they confined their activities to the encouragement of parents' moral and financial responsibilities toward the school: care should be exercised lest these lapse into anticlericalism. Quebec's most pressing need in education was to inculcate greater understanding of the worthwhile-ness of education "comme facteur d'ascension individuelle et collective." Each citizen must be certain he is fulfilling his duties in this field of endeavour "avant de lancer la pierre à ceux qui jouent leur rôle mieux que lui."<sup>61</sup>

L'Heureux placed unbounded confidence in the sagacity of the Catholic Committee's decisions. Well prior to the

58. Ibid., 12 septembre 1938.

59. Loc. cit.

60. Ibid., 3 septembre 1937.

61. Ibid., 12 septembre 1938, 10 mai 1941.

enactment of compulsory education, as we have just learned, he had manifested a constant interest in the ultimate purposes of the French-Canadian school system and urged all concerned to give education the important consideration it merited. He viewed compulsory education as a necessary step in promoting these ends, and accordingly gave Perrier's bill his complete support.

62

Some people had been 'surprised', noted L'Heureux, at the Catholic Committee's decision in favour of compulsory education. Not only was it couched in "sages modalités"; above all, the Committee did not view it as a panacea. He urged the Legislature to emulate the wisdom of the latter; if it did so, the Province would be enriched by the passage of a progressive piece of legislation. He did not attempt to minimize or conceal his newspaper's opposition to compulsory education thirty years earlier. At that time, Freemasonry was a real danger to the integrity of the Catholic school. Two principal factors, noted the editor of L'Action Catholique, motivated the change of attitude on the part of Catholic authorities in Quebec toward compulsory education: Church doctrine on the role of the State and especially its right to legislate a minimum period of schooling; and the dreary picture painted by the Province's statistics on school attendance. 63

62. Ibid., 30 décembre 1942.

63. L'Heureux in Ibid., 26 juillet 1941, 30 décembre 1942, 20 avril 1943; L.P. Roy, in Ibid., 8 mai 1943. L'Heureux blamed the fall of France in 1940 partially on Masonic influences. (30 décembre 1942).

The Catholic Committee viewed compulsory education not as "un empiètement de l'Etat, mais un achèvement vers la politique familiale que devra constituer l'une des supériorités de l'ordre nouveau sur les conditions sociales d'aujourd'hui." `Quebec was at a crossroads, he continued, between "la disparition progressive" and "la vie intense." The latter would be best achieved by giving French-Canadians the tools which only education can provide: "revendiquer partout la place qui lui revient de droit" would be chimerical without an effort "surtout à l'avenir, de mettre en pleine valeur ses précieuses énergies intellectuelles, morales et physiques, c'est-à-dire s'il négligeait son éducation."<sup>64</sup>

L'Heureux' confidence in Perrier was based on the belief that the Provincial Secretary's intentions in regard to educational reform, particularly compulsory education, were consonant with the Catholic Committee's pronouncements. Perrier's presentation of the compulsory education bill, he wrote, was "parfaitement conforme aux exigences de la doctrine catholique et à celles de notre civilisation en pleine évolution." He lauded Perrier's "wisdom, courage and progressive spirit." Intelligent debate would best serve the Province, reiterated L'Heureux. It would be most injudicious to "prêter gratuitement aux hommes des mauvaises intentions."

64. Ibid., 30 décembre 1942.

He spoke out strongly against anyone who "en catimini et sans preuve" applied the stigma of Free-Masonry to their opponents for what were often political, not religious, motives. "L'Eglise reprouve ce manque flagrant de charité, même lorsqu'on feint de la servir ainsi." <sup>65</sup>

L'Heureux urged the legislators to bear in mind several "considerations" during the compulsory education debate. Education was of supreme importance for French-Canadians: "tant vaut l'homme par sa formation intellectuelle et morale, tant vaut le peuple, tant vaut toute la patrie." Education must be Christian in character, for "good citizenship is dependant upon being a good Christian." It was, in addition, a highly specialized discipline; to be avoided were both summary consideration, and immoderate criticism, of the issues involved. <sup>66</sup> The compulsory education proposal must be discussed in a serene atmosphere, free from "... les excès, soit d'un radicalisme exalté, soit d'un

65. On the theme of Free-Masonry, consult the following: Louis-C de Léry, S.J., La Franc-Maçonnerie, ennemie de l'Eglise et de la Patrie, Québec, L'Action Catholique, \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_, La Franc-Maçonnerie et l'Effondrement de la France, in Relations, février, 1941, pp. 37-39; \_\_\_\_\_, La Franc-Maçonnerie et l'Utopie de l'Eglise, in Relations, juillet, 1941, p. 45 ; André Roy, La Franc-Maçonnerie toujours active, in L'Action Catholique, 14 avril 1942; and Le Progrès du Saguenay, 6 mai 1943.

66. L'Action Catholique, 26 avril 1943.

conservatisme obtus." <sup>67</sup>

Under the terms of the law, opined L'Heureux, the State was called upon to fulfil "une mission supplétive très importante au service de l'éducation." Such a role should not be interpreted as an attack on the Church, for it supposed the "full respect of the innate rights" of the latter. In short, there was no danger to the denominational basis of the Quebec school system in the adoption of the compulsory education law. If in the past, he added, education had not the absolute necessity it had today, there was no longer any doubt that even the "humblest" <sup>68</sup> occupation must be carried out with both intelligence and vigour if each citizen was to attain his "place in the sun" and not act as "un boulet à traîner pour la collectivité." <sup>69</sup> He obviously viewed compulsory education as having a certain 'shock value' -- the joint intervention of the Committee and the government "peut impressionner heureusement la population..." towards a realization of the importance of regular attendance. <sup>70</sup>

67. Loc. cit. One is reminded of his warning to Bouchard to steer clear of any compulsory education movements in the 1940's. Ibid., 26 juillet 1941.

68. Cf. Père Lalande's suggestion that the better-educated should from time to time work at the menial tasks the less-educated gravitated towards. (Chapter one, footnote 29).

69. L'Action Catholique, 30 décembre 1942, 26 avril 1943.

70. Ibid., 30 décembre 1942.

He became considerably exercised at what he viewed as excesses, ostensibly committed in the name of the Church, against the Bishops for their approval of compulsory education. Not only was their recommendation worthy of support; even the best laws are useless, if sufficiently ridiculed. The Church, in Quebec as elsewhere, was in the vanguard of the moral and intellectual education of youth; to utter, in its name but without its permission "des propos susceptibles de raviver certaines vieilles calomnies historiques propagées contre Elle par ses ennemis" was to render it a great disservice. He was particularly angered at the unsigned "A. C.P.F." letter sent to all deputies and newspapers, attacking the Committee's recommendation of compulsory education. "Il est bien permis," commented L'Heureux drily, "de suspecter un peu l'orientation de ceux qui croient les évêques insuffisamment catholiques ou insuffisamment avertis des dangers que court la religion."<sup>71</sup>

Thus it can be seen that L'Action Catholique, under the direction of L'Heureux, lent invaluable editorial support to Perrier's campaign to pass a compulsory education measure.

71. Ibid., 27 avril 1943 (L'Heureux), and 8 mai 1943 (L.P. Roy). Perrier uttered similar words: "Je sais que le clergé méprise les flatteurs et est prêt à travailler avec ceux qui veulent véritablement collaborer." La Presse, 16 mai 1941. Alexis Caron (L., Hull) suggested the initials of the anonymous letter ("A.C.P.F.") represented the "Association catholique des pauvres fous." La Presse, 28 avril 1943.

The Liberal majority in the Assembly and in the Legislative Council assured the bill's passage, but L'Heureux was eminently correct in observing that its ultimate success lay in the hands of the people. Heightened public awareness, as a result of the wise decision of the Catholic Committee, of the importance of "une meilleure collaboration de la famille avec l'école" would be an even greater, albeit indirect, result of the bill than any increased rate of attendance:

Si une loi de fréquentation  
obligatoire est maintenant utile  
la collaboration de la famille  
avec l'école est indispensable.  
A tel point que, sans telle colla-  
boration, la loi de fréquentation  
scolaire elle-même serait lettre  
morte. <sup>72</sup>

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It is apparent, therefore, that public opinion, as reflected in the great majority of the Province's leading, French-language metropolitan dailies, expressed confidence in compulsory education and in the conduct and intentions of Provincial Secretary Hector Perrier. Had a significant segment of the population been opposed to the adoption of such

72. L'Action Catholique, 4 mai 1943. The words used by L'Heureux in the above editorial are almost identical to those in Cardinal Villeneuve's letter read in all the parishes of the Province in 1941 (Relations, septembre, 1941, p. 238): "Si l'instruction a toujours été utile, elle est de nos jours nécessaire non seulement pour mener une vie conforme à sa dignité d'homme et de chrétien, mais aussi pour servir comme il convient la famille et la patrie."

a law, one may speculate that Perrier, with Godbout's backing, might have proceeded anyway with presentation of the measure.<sup>73</sup> The fact, however, that a wide spectrum of newspaper opinion, from the ultraliberal Le Canada to the episcopally-guided L'Action Catholique, understood the necessity of the bill proved a valuable source of support for Hector Perrier. Even the dissident Le Devoir recognized the ill -- declining attendance in the Province's elementary schools -- which compulsory education sought to curb, although it saw fit to term the bill illusory.

73. Perrier, as we have seen, had spoken to Godbout of his two "hobbies" before he entered the Cabinet -- compulsory education and the founding of a Conservatory of Music.

### Conclusion

My study of compulsory education in the Province of Quebec between 1940 and 1943 ends with royal sanction of the bill (7 George VI, ch. 13, Statuts de Québec, 1943) enacting it as law on June 23, 1943. I have not attempted to assess evidence that this legislation was, for different reasons, not energetically applied or obeyed.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, any judgment on the role compulsory education played in the defeat of the Godbout government in August, 1944 is beyond the scope of this study. As for Hector Perrier's resignation as Provincial Secretary and his decision not to seek re-election in 1944, he had clearly indicated to Premier Godbout when he joined the Cabinet in 1940 that he intended to serve one term only. During this time, Perrier accomplished his main aim as Provincial Secretary: the enactment of compulsory education.

The examination of the circumstances surrounding the passage of compulsory education in the 1940-1943 period reveals that the principal impetus for its passage came from Hector Perrier. The bill reflected his belief that traditional

1. Georges Desjardins, S.J., Les Ecoles du Québec, Québec, Bellarmin, 1950, p. 104: "La nouvelle loi de l'instruction obligatoire n'étant pas d'ailleurs appliquée, on doit conclure que le Québec est la seule province du Canada qui ne doive rien de sa haute fréquentation scolaire à une législation coercitive. He does add, however, that (p. 105): "... les enfants du Québec sont plus assidus à fréquenter l'école tout le temps qu'ils la fréquentent mais ils la fréquentent un peu moins longtemps que les enfants des autres provinces."

methods of moral suasion failed to produce acceptable rates of attendance in the Province's elementary schools. This was the view which he succeeded in persuading the Catholic Committee to adopt. Unsatisfactory levels of attendance militated, in Perrier's and ultimately the Catholic Committee's eyes, against the educational progress needed to prepare the Province for postwar demands.

The first chapter dealt with the period from 1867 until 1919, when the educational system of the Province of Quebec took form, and the initial attempts to enact compulsory education occurred. Quebec was the last Province in Canada to adopt compulsory education. An important reason for this was the reluctance of the Province's successive governments to challenge the Church's hegemony in the field of Catholic education. The establishment in 1869 of the Catholic Committee of the Council of Education marked the Church's assumption of a decisive role in the administration of Catholic schools. At the same time the Catholic hierarchy refused to countenance or even entertain any effort by the State to assume a more weighty role in education. The failure of the Marchand government's proposal, for example, in 1897 to reestablish a Department of Education discouraged any bold educational initiatives in the following years. Even in the 1912-1919 period, when compulsory education advocates enjoyed their greatest exposure prior to 1943, Sir Lomer Gouin's Liberal government opposed any moves which promised to substantially modify the existing pattern of Catholic

education. Gouin, like his predecessors, was well aware of the hierarchy's official view that compulsory education was a threat to the religious foundations of the Province's Catholic schools. This was a view shared by the bulk of clerical opinion in Quebec, and indeed Cardinal Bégin of Quebec considered compulsory education likely to lead to religious neutrality. In short, the political and social climate in the 1867-1919 period discouraged the adoption of compulsory education.

The following chapter examined the steps leading up to the Catholic Committee's approval of compulsory education on December 17, 1942. From 1919 until 1940, compulsory education was replaced by the issue of bilingual teaching as the focal point of Quebec's educational interest. Hector Perrier's nomination as Provincial Secretary in October, 1940 signaled the intention of the Honorable Adélard Godbout's government to place educational reform among the priorities in the preparation of Quebec for the postwar world. While Perrier was careful to avoid any public declaration of his support for compulsory education until he had managed to persuade the Catholic Committee of its necessity, he constantly reiterated the need for a more pragmatic and realistic outlook on education during his bye-election campaign. Once elected, Perrier moved to bring the problem of declining attendance -- one he had been well-aware of for over ten years -- to the attention of the Catholic Committee by initiating an inquiry into school attendance headed by Père Paul-Emile

Beaudoin. Its findings became sufficiently clear even prior to its completion to persuade the Catholic Committee to recommend the adoption of compulsory education. Instrumental in this historic decision of December 17, 1942, was Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec from 1931 until 1947. Recognizing that the attendance situation called for immediate action, he warned the Province of the need for regular attendance as early as September, 1941. The Cardinal brought to his consideration of this problem as enlightened conception of an expanded State role in education. For the first time since 1875, the State in Quebec would assume a significant share in the direction of Quebec's educational future. Like Perrier, the Cardinal and the majority of the Catholic Committee viewed the passage of compulsory education as a means not only to ensure an adequate level of attendance, but also the continued and vital growth of that very system. The Honorable Victor Doré, Superintendent of Education from 1939 until 1946, and a long-time associate of Perrier's in educational endeavours, used the powers of his office to promote compulsory education both among the members of declining attendance to the attention of teachers and administrators throughout the Province. The Vatican's adoption of a compulsory education law in 1929 was instrumental in overcoming doctrinal opposition to compulsory education in Quebec, and indeed the text of this law served as the model of Perrier's compulsory education proposal to the Legislative

Assembly in 1943. Thus Perrier, through determined yet sagacious pursuit of his goal, was able to secure the support of the highest authority in Catholic education in Quebec, the Catholic Committee, for a measure which the same Committee had categorically condemned only twenty-five years before.

The third chapter examined the passage of compulsory education by the Legislative Assembly. Having once obtained the approbation of the Catholic Committee for compulsory education, Perrier did not delay in having a bill incorporating this principle presented to the Assembly in April, 1943. This proposal was enacted remarkably easily. Perrier was the government's chief spokesman for the bill, and his speeches were characterized by careful documentation and logical presentation. Any criticism was obviated by the Catholic Committee's approval, thus forcing the Union Nationale to concentrate on the peripheral issues of the alleged economic hardships the government's proposal would inflict on school boards. No Opposition speaker ever challenged the fundamental premise of the bill - to stimulate parental realization of the crucial importance of their children's regular attendance. Indeed, two members of the Union Nationale supported the government bill, as did the Independent René Chaloult. The debate was, nevertheless, marked by a serious altercation between Premier Godbout and René Chaloult, an incident which did not retard adoption of the bill but nevertheless compromised the theretofore steady passage of

the bill. Approval in the Legislative Council followed without any difficulty.

I examined the attitude of the Province's leading newspapers to compulsory education in the final chapter. Perrier's appointment as Provincial Secretary in 1940 indicated the Godbout government's intent to undertake major educational reform in the eyes of the principal daily newspapers of Montreal and Quebec. All six newspapers examined followed his campaign for election in Terrebonne and the steps he undertook in the following two years to illustrate to the Catholic Committee and the Province the necessity for a compulsory education law. All but Le Devoir approved compulsory education following the Committee's decision of December 17, 1942. These same five newspapers gave editorial approval to the government's bill in 1943. Only Le Devoir, relying not on editorials but on three letters (one anonymous) and the sarcasm of "Le Carnet du Grincheux," opposed compulsory education. The most significant expression of approval came from L'Action Catholique, edited by Eugène L'Heureux. As Cardinal Villeneuve's spokesman, its views on Perrier's educational views and above all on compulsory education were vital, for any hesitation on its part would illustrate a similar reluctance by the Cardinal. Perrier's conduct, both during the Terrebonne bye-election and after, won L'Heureux' strong support.

My examination of the passage of compulsory education in 1943 reveals that Hector Perrier was the principal

author of this educational reform. He did so, moreover, with the full cooperation and support of the leading authorities of the Province in Catholic education. In so doing, Perrier achieved what was his principal motive for joining the Cabinet in 1940.

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St René d'Anker

Le 27 février 1943.

La Scolarité Obligatoire.

Comme je viens de lire sur la presse du 20 février que la scolarité Obligatoire est discuté un mot pour vous dire que nous autre aussi nous sommes pour cela car ici nous sommes à une endroit où il y a 18 enfants d'âge d'école et qui ne peuvent la fréquenter parce qu'ils sont trop loing il ne peuvent pas s'arracher de chez eux et surtout car il sont <sup>depuis 15 km</sup> à 3 mille  $\frac{1}{2}$  de l'école et ne peuvent la fréquenter cause que c'est trop loing et ces enfant reste dans l'ignorance et comme tant ces parents sont pas à poursuivre l'instruction scolaire Obligatoire. et ainsi que le celui qui signe est pour cela aussi.

David Chalifoux

St René d'Anker  
Co. Mineur  
3 mi



(EN MARGE DU BILL RELATIF A LA FREQUENTATION SCOLAIRE OBLIGATOIRE).

Nous, membres de l'A.C.P.F., nous opposons énergiquement à l'adoption du bill relatif à la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire présentement devant la Législature provinciale.

Pour éclairer nos députés qui auront à endosser une grave responsabilité en adoptant ce fameux bill, nous nous permettons de mettre à jour les faits suivants:

**QUI A CONÇU L'IDEE D'UN TEL PROJET?...**

- La franc-maçonnerie anglaise qui, depuis au-delà de cent ans, trame dans l'ombre à certains congrès de l'éducation.

PREMIER: voir "Culture", volume 3, numéro 4, décembre 1942, rapport du 20e congrès de l'Association de l'éducation du Canada Terre-Neuve par monsieur H.-O. Filteau, secrétaire du département de l'Instruction publique, seul délégué canadien-français de la Province de Québec.

FAIT A RETENIR: La Province de Québec, à majorité catholique et canadienne-française, est représentée, à ses assemblées, par un seul Canadien-Français, monsieur H.-O. Filteau; cinq Anglo-canadiens, dont quelques-uns de nobles franc-maçons, y représentant la majorité anglaise et protestante.

Il paraît que l'influence du milieu aurait agi sur monsieur H.-O. Filteau au point que ce dernier serait devenu presque reconnaissable aux yeux de ceux qui le fréquentent habituellement sous le nom de "BO. NE ENTRE".

**QUI EST LE PERE DE CET AVORTON?...**

- Monsieur Victor Doré, surintendant du département de l'Instruction publique, le père d'une noblesse consommée.

P. P. P.: la gloire dont il se rend compte d'avoir sa manipulation de façon à faire enlever par le clergé tout l'édifice d'un tel projet en se couvrant, pour l'occasion, du manteau cardinalice et déguisant ainsi de ses responsabilités la petite franc-maçonnerie québécoise confortablement installée, à l'abri de tous soupçons, sur la colline parlementaire.

**QUI EN EST LE PARRAIN?.....**

- Malheur usé, hélas! son Eminence Révérendissime, le Cardinal Jean-Marie Villeneuve, O. M. I., archevêque de Québec, résident au Palais cardinalice, à Québec.

Quel était son intérêt personnel? L'opportunité de se réunir lors de banquet qui a suivi le mariage de son fils (il avait eu occasion de se rencontrer avec la franc-maçonnerie) par ses appels pressants, aux évêques afin de les pousser à la majorité pour que la loi romaine fût rendue, toujours sous le maudit prétexte de la "BO. NE ENTRE", l'initiative des "BO. NE ENTRE" CANADIENS, et ainsi aussi que ne soient pas trop oubliés certains honneurs réservés de l'Assemblée législative qui, par l'intermédiaire de leur secrétaire, monsieur Doré, avait tout cuisiné de façon à ce que tout marchât à un pas très accéléré.

Pourquoi donc un tel empressement à passer une mesure si redoutable?.....

Pourquoi donc n'avoir pas attendu les conclusions de l'enquête provinciale sur la fréquentation scolaire confiée au révérend père Paul-Marie de la Rivière, S. J., à la demande de l'honorable secrétaire de la Province, pour l'entière satisfaction de tous les membres de la législature provinciale le 28 décembre 1941?....

Pourquoi donc encore, Son Eminence n'a-t-elle pas fait suite à son idée lumineuse de tenir, sous les auspices du Comité catholique, un congrès de l'éducation auquel auraient été invités les éducateurs, les économistes et les sociologues les plus expérimentés?...

On aurait pu alors étudier le mal dans sa racine, on aurait pu en profiter pour examiner toute l'organisation de l'école primaire et on aurait alors mieux éclairé et en bien meilleure posture pour répondre ce problème d'une telle importance.

On aurait pu aussi, lors de ce congrès, consulter nos bons curés que la présente loi forcera inévitablement à devenir, au détriment de leur ministère des âmes, les délateurs de leurs paroissiens. Si nous manquons de confiance en nos sommités, tant religieuses que civiles, nous avons encore un très profond respect pour nos curés et leurs aides, messieurs les Vicaires, qui, vivant avec le peuple, connaissent mieux que tout autre ses besoins et les remèdes à apporter à ses maux.

Plusieurs bons Curés et Vicaires consultés à cette fin, ne nous ont pas caché leur ressentiment à l'encontre d'une telle mesure coercitive.

Pourquoi n'a-t-on pas tenu compte de la protestation de la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal et de la J.O.C.?...

Pourquoi monsieur le surintendant dit-il, en page 9 du procès-verbal de la séance du 17 décembre 1942, qu'il importait, non seulement de poursuivre le plus rapidement possible le travail déjà commencé, mais de recueillir des statistiques de toute nature sur la fréquentation scolaire en la Province, alors que les conclusions de l'enquête précieuse ne sont pas encore connues?...

Monsieur Maurice Brodeur posséderait-il une statistique si objective, si précise et si bien détaillée pour que monsieur le surintendant se justifiait d'une telle hâte à faire avaler cette pillule, si "IONIE" s'en sentait?... Monsieur le surintendant pourrait-il nous dire où monsieur Brodeur a puisé ses statistiques?... Au département de l'Instruction publique? Aux États-Unis? En Allemagne? En Ontario? Où?... Qu'on nous le dise.

Que font et que feront donc nos commissions scolaires gavées d'octrois?... Dormiront-elles, bouche bée, sur leurs subaides?...

VOICI QUELQUES-UNES DES CONSÉQUENCES DE L'INSTRUCTION, DANS LES STATUTS DE LA PROVINCE, D'UN BILL DONT L'APPLICATION SERAIT RIDICULE ET UTOPIQUE:

Avec cette nouvelle loi, si un enfant a 6 ans le 2 juillet, il va être admis en classe, mais sera-t-on obligé de payer pour son instruction?... Alors, on ne l'enverra pas. Combien y en a-t-il dans ce cas?... 20?, 50?,?... Que monsieur le surintendant ou son enquêteur monsieur Brodeur nous le dise. Comment peut-il y a 14 ans le premier juillet, son enfant n'aurait pas été en classe?... On est étonné de ne pas payer pour son enfant lorsqu'on ne paie pas ou on le retire de la classe. Que deviendra alors la fréquentation pour les enfants de 15 et de 16 ans?...

Si un enfant de 10 ans a du talent qu'on veuille l'envoyer au cours classique, l'ÉTAT paiera-t-il pour?... Le maintiendra-t-il après 14 ans?.... En fera-t-il un raté, un désorienté, en l'abandonnant après 14 ans?....

Si son état de santé ne lui permet pas de suivre une classe régulière, l'État paiera-t-il un cours privé à domicile ou ailleurs?...

Les écoles d'arts et métiers seront-elles gratuites?.... Si un enfant est précoce et s'il entre à l'école d'arts et métiers avant 14 ans, le Gouvernement paiera-t-il son cours?.... L'abandonnera-t-il après 14 ans?.....

Et que dire maintenant de tous les tracas qu'auront les parents qui, pour une raison ou pour une autre, seront forcés de garder à la maison un enfant de 6 à 14 ans? Que fera-t-on alors du droit des parents sur l'éducation des enfants?... Comment suppléera-t-on, surtout à la campagne, à la main-d'oeuvre des enfants qui, dans certains travaux, donnent un rendement équivalent à celui d'un étranger qu'il faudrait payer gros prix et que malheureusement on ne trouve pas à cause de l'état de guerre actuelle?

Quant à la gratuité et à l'uniformité des livres, qu'entend-on faire?... Prétend-on maintenir la saine concurrence actuelle entre les auteurs ou la faire disparaître au bénéfice d'amis et de certains officiers du Département, plus ou moins intéressés dans l'édition de certains annuels, tels: le Droit Commercial de Miller et Beaulieu, le Journal d'appel, Mon Premier Livre, Mon Deuxième Livre etc., etc.,?... Dans ce cas, les auteurs, assurés d'un tirage constant, se soucieront-ils de garder toujours dans leurs manuels une saine doctrine?... Donneront-ils à l'enfant, comme première idée de l'adoration, qu'on peut adorer n'importe quoi, même les chats (voir page 6, 2e leçon, Mon Premier Livre)?... Donnera-t-on à l'enfant une fausse idée du baptême, à savoir que "tous les êtres, ici-bas, hommes et choses, ont été baptisés" voir page 24, Mon Premier Livre)?... Et ainsi de suite chaque fois que l'on présente une idée religieuse nouvelle à l'enfant?...

Que de doutes fondés! Que d'appréhensions motivées, quand on sait que l'étude de la synthèse sur l'objet de l'école primaire à ses divers degrés a été confiée à un ami de monsieur Doré, également ami et adepte de Jean-Charles Harvey, et dont on a tu le nom aux membres mêmes du Comité Catholique.

Cette loi entrera-t-elle efficace avec ses nombreux cas d'exceptions qu'on sera obligé de faire et que l'on prévoit déjà?...

Les commission scolaires se prêteront-elles de bonne foi à défrayer le coût d'emploi des contrôleurs d'absences, "stool pigeons" qui ne sont pas sous leur contrôle mais qui relèvent du surintendant

Quelles seront les qualifications morales, physiques et autres de ces "stool pigeons" à l'emploi du Gouvernement?

Quel danger d'entraîner nos Curés à devenir complices de ces "stool pigeons" qui iront puiser leurs renseignements au presbytère?

Combien en coûtera-t-il aux commissions scolaires pour le maintien de ces "stool pigeons" qui auront le pouvoir d'arrêter tout enfant selon que celui-ci leur paraîtra avoir l'âge de la fréquentation obligatoire?... Et alors, que d'injustices! que de victi-mes et que de discriminations contre l'autorité religieuse!

N'y voit-on pas plutôt une nouvelle pression que veulent exercer nos gouvernants sur le peuple déjà assez pressuré par les impôts et les taxes de toutes sortes supposés payés pour le triomphe de la liberté qu'on veut nous restreindre?...

Par ce projet de loi qui n'est, si l'on en croit les journaux, que le prélude d'une série d'autres lois encore plus suspectes, ne ferait-on pas le jeu de forces occultes qui tentent à détruire, dans la Province de Québec, tout ce qu'il y a de religieux et même de chrétien dans le système d'éducation?.

CONCLUSIONS

Si Son Eminence, ses collègues "à plat ventriste" et nos gouvernants haut cotés dans les sphères de la dictature économique voulaient apporter autant de zèle à la revendication d'un juste salaire et d'allocation familiales en faveur des ouvriers, ceux-ci seraient en mesure de faire vivre honorablement, par eux-mêmes, leur famille sans qu'ils aient à subir l'influence de l'Etat dans un domaine qui leur appartient de droit naturel et le problème de la fréquentation scolaire serait de ce fait résolu.

Voilà, messieurs, exprimés tout haut, les sentiments profonds de la populace. A vous de les prendre en considération, de les faire vôtres ou de les rejeter.

A chacun ses responsabilités! Chacun recueillera ce qu'il aura semé: qu'on se le tienne pour dit'.

HONNEUR, GLOIRE ET MERCI AUX DISSIDENTS.



CHAPITRE 13

CHAPTER 13

Loi concernant la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire

An Act respecting Compulsory School Attendance

[Sanctionnée le 26 mai 1943]

[Assented to, the 26th of May, 1943]

SA MAJESTÉ, de l'avis et du consentement du Conseil législatif et de l'Assemblée législative de Québec, décrète ce qui suit:

HIS MAJESTY, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and of the Legislative Assembly of Quebec, enacts as follows:

S.R., c. 59, a. 2, am.

1. L'article 2 de la Loi de l'instruction publique (Statuts refondus, 1941, chapitre 59) modifié par l'article 1 de la loi 6 George VI, chapitre 20 est de nouveau modifié en remplaçant le paragraphe 19° par le suivant:

"Rétribution mensuelle"

"19° Les mots "rétribution mensuelle" désignent la contribution qui peut être exigée pour tout enfant qui fréquente certaines écoles publiques;"

1. Section 2 of the Education Act (Revised Statutes, 1941, chapter 59), as amended by the act 6 George VI, chapter 20, section 1, is again amended by replacing paragraph 19 thereof by the following:

"19. The words "monthly fees" mean "Monthly the contribution which may be exacted in respect of each child who attends certain public schools;"

S.R., c. 59, a. 69, am.

Admission à l'école, obligatoire.

2. L'article 69 de ladite loi est modifié en ajoutant, à la fin, ce qui suit: "et dans lesquelles ils sont tenus d'admettre aux cours qui y sont donnés, tout enfant domicilié dans la municipalité, depuis le début de l'année scolaire suivant le jour où il a atteint l'âge de cinq ans, jusqu'à la fin de l'année scolaire au cours de laquelle il a atteint l'âge de seize ans".

2. Section 69 of the said act is amended by adding, at the end thereof, the following: "who shall be obliged to admit to the grades provided in such schools every child domiciled in the municipality, from the beginning of the school year following the day on which he attains the age of five years until the end of the school year in which he attains the age of sixteen years".

S.R., c. 59, a. 96, am.

3. L'article 96 de ladite loi est modifié en insérant, après le mot "payant", dans la onzième ligne, les mots " , s'il y a lieu, ".

3. Section 96 of the said act is amended by inserting, after the word: "fee", in the eleventh line thereof, the words: " , if any, ".

d., aa. 57-263, emp.

aux de la rétribution mensuelle.

4. Les articles 257 à 263 de ladite loi sont remplacés par les suivants:

"257. Les commissaires et les syndic d'écoles peuvent fixer, en même temps que le taux de la cotisation scolaire, celui d'une

4. Sections 257 to 263 of the said act are replaced by the following:

"257. School commissioners and trustees may fix a monthly fee for grades above the elementary or primary elementary

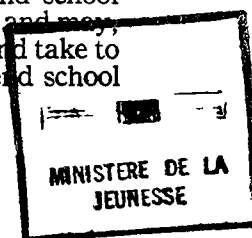
Id., ss. 257-263, replaced. Amount of monthly fee.

	rétribution mensuelle pour les cours d'un degré supérieur à l'élémentaire ou au primaire élémentaire.	grades, when they determine the school tax.
Rétribution uniforme.	"258. Cette rétribution doit être uniforme pour tous les cours d'un même degré dans les écoles d'une même municipalité.	"258. Such fee shall be uniform for the same grades in all schools of the same municipality.
Par qui payable.	"259. La rétribution mensuelle est payable au secrétaire-trésorier par le père ou la mère, le tuteur ou gardien de chaque enfant qui fréquente une telle école et qui a terminé l'année scolaire au cours de laquelle il a atteint l'âge de quatorze ans.	"259. The monthly fee shall be payable to the secretary-treasurer by the father, mother, tutor or guardian of each child attending such a school and having completed the school year in which he attains the age of fourteen years.
Perception.	"260. Les commissaires et les syndics peuvent aussi, à leur discrétion, requérir les instituteurs et les institutrices de percevoir la rétribution mensuelle dans leur école respective au commencement de chaque mois, et, dans ce cas, les reçus signés par les instituteurs ou les institutrices auront la même valeur légale que s'ils portaient la signature du secrétaire-trésorier. Les instituteurs et les institutrices chargés de cette perception doivent à la fin de chaque mois faire remise au secrétaire-trésorier des sommes perçues ainsi que d'une liste de tous les élèves qui ont acquitté la rétribution mensuelle.	"260. The commissioners and the trustees may also, at their discretion, require the teachers to collect the monthly fee in their respective schools, at the beginning of each month, and, in such case, the receipts signed by the teachers shall have the same legal value as if they bore the signature of the secretary-treasurer. The teachers charged with the collection shall, at the end of each month, remit to the secretary-treasurer the sums collected and a list of all the pupils who have paid the monthly fee.
Privilèges, etc.	"261. La rétribution mensuelle comporte les mêmes privilèges et hypothèques que la cotisation scolaire; elle peut être perçue de la même manière et en même temps que celle-ci, ou être exigée d'avance chaque mois, excepté dans les municipalités où le mode de perception est réglé par une loi spéciale ou un règlement de la corporation scolaire.	"261. The monthly fee shall be secured by the same privileges and hypothecs as the school assessment. It may be collected in the same manner and at the same time as the school assessment, or may be exacted monthly and in advance, except in municipalities in which the collection is governed by a special act or by a by-law of the school corporation.
Indigents.	"262. La rétribution mensuelle ne peut être exigée des indigents.	"262. No school fees may be exacted from indigent persons.
Mention au rapport.	"263. Dans le rapport qu'ils sont tenus de transmettre au surintendant, les commissaires ou les syndics d'écoles doivent indiquer le taux de la rétribution mensuelle fixé pour la municipalité et le montant qui en a été perçu."	"263. School boards, in the report which they are bound to send to the Superintendent, shall state the amount of monthly fees fixed for the municipality, and the amount of such fees actually collected."
S.R., c. 59, a. 285, am.	5. L'article 285 de ladite loi est modifié en remplaçant le premier alinéa par les suivants:	5. Section 285 <sup>1</sup> of the said act is amended by replacing the first paragraph thereof by the following:
Recensement annuel.	"285. Le secrétaire-trésorier est tenu de faire chaque année, au cours du mois de septembre, le recensement des enfants domiciliés dans la municipalité scolaire; les	"285. The secretary-treasurer shall make, every year, during the month of September, a census of the children domiciled in the school municipality, and

	commissaires et les syndics d'écoles doivent veiller à ce qu'il remplisse ce devoir.	the school commissioners and trustees shall see that he performs such duty.
Distinctions.	Dans ce recensement, il doit faire la distinction entre les garçons et filles, et entre chacun des âges de cinq à dix-sept ans inclusivement.	In such census, the secretary-treasurer shall distinguish between boys and girls and between children of each of the ages from five to seventeen years, inclusive.
Age.	L'âge à inscrire est celui de l'enfant le premier juillet précédent.	The age to be entered shall be that of the child concerned on the first of July preceding.
Indications.	Pour chacun de ces enfants, le secrétaire-trésorier doit indiquer: a) s'il fréquente l'école dans la municipalité; b) s'il fréquente l'école hors de la municipalité; c) s'il suit des cours du soir ou des cours spécialisés pendant une partie de l'année; ou d) s'il ne fréquente pas l'école, et, s'il s'agit d'un enfant de six à quatorze ans inclusivement, pour quel motif."	For each such child the secretary-treasurer shall indicate: a. If he attends school in the municipality; b. If he attends school outside the municipality; c. If he takes night courses or special courses during part of the year; or d. If he does not attend school; and, in the case of a child of from six to fourteen years, inclusive, the reason why he does not attend school."
S.R., c. 59, a. 288, remp.	<b>6.</b> L'article 288 de ladite loi est remplacé par le suivant:	<b>6.</b> Section 288 of the said act is replaced by the following:
Sommaire au surintendant.	" <b>288.</b> Un sommaire du recensement doit être transmis au surintendant avant le quinze octobre sur la formule fournie par ce dernier."	" <b>288.</b> A summary of the census shall be sent to the Superintendent before the fifteenth of October, on the form supplied by the latter."
S.R., c. 59, aa. 290a-290y, aj.	<b>7.</b> Ladite loi est modifiée en insérant après l'article 290, la section suivante comprenant les articles 290a à 290y inclusivement:	<b>7.</b> The said act is amended by inserting, after section 290 thereof, the following division comprising sections 290a to 290y, inclusive:
	"SECTION IVa	"DIVISION IVa
	"DE LA FRÉQUENTATION SCOLAIRE OBLIGATOIRE	"COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
Obligation de fréquenter l'école.	" <b>290a.</b> Tout enfant doit fréquenter l'école chaque année tous les jours pendant lesquels les écoles publiques sont en activité suivant les règlements établis par l'autorité compétente, depuis le début de l'année scolaire suivant le jour où il a atteint l'âge de six ans jusqu'à la fin de l'année scolaire au cours de laquelle il a atteint l'âge de quatorze ans.	" <b>290a.</b> Every child must attend school every day, in each year, on which the public schools are open in accordance with the regulations made by the proper authority, from the beginning of the school year following the day on which he attains the age of six years until the end of the school year in which he attains the age of fourteen years.
Fréquentation satisfaisante.	" <b>290b.</b> Satisfait à cette obligation: 1° L'enfant qui fréquente une école sous le contrôle d'une commission scolaire ou toute autre école organisée sous l'empire des lois de cette province;	" <b>290b.</b> Such obligation is complied with by: 1. Any child who attends a school under the control of a school board or any other school organized under the laws of this Province;

	2° Celui qui reçoit à domicile un enseignement efficace.	2. Any child who receives effective instruction at home.	
Exemptions.	<p>“290c. Est dispensé de cette obligation:</p> <p>1° L'enfant qui est empêché de fréquenter l'école par maladie ou infirmité;</p> <p>2° Celui qui a obtenu un certificat attestant qu'il a terminé avec succès le cours d'études élémentaires ou primaires élémentaires ou un autre certificat officiel équivalent;</p> <p>3° Celui qui a été expulsé de l'école publique suivant la loi et les règlements scolaires;</p> <p>4° Tout enfant âgé de moins de dix ans et résidant à une distance de plus de deux milles, par le chemin le plus court, de l'école publique la plus rapprochée à laquelle il a droit d'être admis, de même que tout enfant qui réside à plus de trois milles, par le chemin le plus court, de l'école publique la plus rapprochée à laquelle il a droit d'être admis, si dans l'un et l'autre cas, la commission scolaire ne pourvoit pas au transport gratuit des enfants à l'école.</p>	<p>“290c. Such obligation shall not affect:</p> <p>1. Any child who is prevented from attending school by illness or infirmity;</p> <p>2. Any child who has obtained a certificate showing that he has successfully completed the elementary or primary elementary school course or another equivalent official certificate;</p> <p>3. Any child who has been expelled from public school according to law and the school regulations;</p> <p>4. Any child under ten years of age residing at a distance of more than two miles, by the shortest road, from the nearest public school to which he is entitled to be admitted, and any child who resides more than three miles, by the shortest road, from the nearest public school to which he is entitled to be admitted, if, in either case, the school board makes no provision for conveying children to school free of charge.</p>	Exceptions.
Dispense accordée par contrôleur d'absences.	<p>“290d. Le contrôleur d'absences de la municipalité peut, sur la demande écrite du père, de la mère, du tuteur ou gardien d'un enfant, dispenser ce dernier de l'obligation de fréquenter l'école pour une ou plusieurs périodes n'excédant pas en tout six semaines par année scolaire lorsque les services de cet enfant sont requis pour les travaux de la ferme ou pour des travaux urgents et nécessaires à la maison ou pour le soutien de cet enfant ou de ses parents.</p>	<p>“290d. The attendance officer of the municipality may, on the written request of the father, mother, tutor or guardian of a child, release the latter from the obligation to attend school for one or more periods not exceeding in all six weeks per school year, when the services of such child are required for farm work or for urgent and necessary work at home or for the maintenance of such child or his relatives.</p>	Release by attendance officer.
Certificat.	<p>La dispense est accordée par un certificat en relatant les motifs.</p>	<p>Such release is granted by means of a certificate stating the reasons therefor.</p>	Certificate.
Emploi prohibé.	<p>“290e. Durant les heures de classe des écoles publiques, nul ne doit, sous peine d'une amende n'excédant pas vingt dollars, employer un enfant avant la fin de l'année scolaire au cours de laquelle cet enfant a atteint l'âge de quatorze ans, à moins qu'une dispense n'ait été accordée en vertu de l'article précédent.</p>	<p>“290e. During the hours when public schools are open, no one shall, on pain of a fine not exceeding twenty dollars, employ any child before the end of the school year in which such child attains the age of fourteen years, unless a release has been granted under the preceding section.</p>	Employment prohibited.
Obligation des parents, etc.	<p>“290f. Le père, la mère, le tuteur ou gardien de chaque enfant obligé par la présente section de fréquenter l'école, doivent faire en sorte que cet enfant satisfasse à cette obligation tous les jours de classe.</p>	<p>“290f. The father, mother, tutor or guardian of every child obliged to attend school under this division shall see that such child complies with such obligation every school day.</p>	Obligation of parents.

Contrôleurs d'absences.	"290g. Toute commission scolaire doit nommer un ou plusieurs contrôleurs d'absences qui doivent surveiller l'observance de la présente section dans la municipalité scolaire pour laquelle ils sont nommés.	"290g. Every school board shall appoint one or more attendance officers who shall supervise the observance of this division in the school municipality for which they are appointed.	Attendance officers.
Idem.	"290h. Avec l'autorisation écrite du surintendant, deux ou plusieurs commissions scolaires peuvent nommer le même contrôleur d'absences.	"290h. With the written authorization of the Superintendent, two or more school boards may appoint the same attendance officer.	Idem.
Nomination, etc.	"290i. La nomination d'un contrôleur d'absences et la fixation de sa rémunération sont faites par résolution dont copie doit être transmise, dans les quinze jours, au surintendant.	"290i. The attendance officer shall be appointed and his remuneration fixed by resolution, of which a copy shall be transmitted to the Superintendent within fifteen days.	Appointment, etc.
Nomination annuelle. Vacances.	"290j. La nomination d'un contrôleur d'absences doit être faite chaque année avant le premier septembre et toute vacance doit être remplie dans les quinze jours de la date où elle survient.	"290j. An attendance officer shall be appointed every year, before the first of September, and any vacancy shall be filled within fifteen days from the date when it occurs.	Annual appointment. Vacancies.
Nomination par surintendant.	"290k. Si la nomination d'un contrôleur d'absences n'est pas faite dans le délai prescrit, le surintendant nomme un contrôleur d'absences et fixe sa rémunération, laquelle est payable par la commission scolaire en défaut.	"290k. If an attendance officer is not appointed within the prescribed delay, the Superintendent shall appoint an attendance officer and fix his remuneration, which shall be payable by the defaulting school board.	Appointment by Superintendent.
Inhabilité.	"290l. Nul commissaire ou syndic d'écoles, nul instituteur ne peut être nommé contrôleur d'absences, mais le secrétaire-trésorier peut être, en même temps, contrôleur d'absences.	"290l. No school commissioner, school trustee or teacher may be appointed attendance officer, but the secretary-treasurer may also be attendance officer.	Disqualification.
Rapports.	"290m. Tout contrôleur d'absences doit faire à la commission scolaire un rapport mensuel et, au surintendant, un rapport annuel, selon les formules prescrites par ce dernier.	"290m. Every attendance officer shall make a monthly report to the school board and an annual report to the Superintendent, on the forms prescribed by the latter.	Reports.
Direction.	"290n. Tout contrôleur d'absences doit accomplir ses devoirs sous la direction de l'inspecteur d'écoles et du surintendant.	"290n. Every attendance officer shall perform his duties under the direction of the school inspector and the Superintendent.	Supervision.
Pouvoirs du contrôleur d'absences.	"290o. Tout contrôleur d'absences est, pour les fins de la présente section, investi des pouvoirs d'un constable. Il peut, sans mandat, entrer dans les établissements industriels ou commerciaux, lieux d'amusements ou terrains de jeux où des enfants, tenus par la présente section de fréquenter l'école, peuvent être employés ou rassemblés et il peut, sans mandat, appréhender et conduire à l'école tout enfant tenu de fréquenter l'école et qui en est absent.	"290o. For the purposes of this division, every attendance officer shall have the powers of a constable. He may, without a warrant, enter industrial or commercial establishments, places of amusement or playgrounds, where any children obliged by this division to attend school may be employed or assembled, and may, without a warrant, apprehend and take to school any child obliged to attend school who is absent therefrom.	Powers of attendance officer.



Liste des enfants.	<p>“290p. Le secrétaire-trésorier est tenu de fournir au contrôleur d’absences et de communiquer, sur demande, à l’inspecteur d’écoles, la liste de tous les enfants domiciliés dans la municipalité et tenus de fréquenter l’école, d’après le recensement annuel.</p>	<p>“290p. The secretary-treasurer shall furnish the attendance officer with a list of all children domiciled in the municipality who are obliged to attend school, according to the annual census, and shall communicate the same to the school inspector on demand.</p>	List of children.
Examen des infractions.	<p>“290q. Le contrôleur d’absences doit examiner tous les cas d’infractions à la présente section qui sont à sa connaissance ou qui lui sont signalés par l’inspecteur d’écoles, un instituteur ou un directeur d’école ou un contribuable.</p>	<p>“290q. The attendance officer shall investigate all cases of offences against this division of which he has knowledge or which are brought to his attention by the school inspector or by a teacher, school principal or ratepayer.</p>	Investigation of offences.
Avis spécial.	<p>“290r. Le contrôleur d’absences doit user de persuasion et s’il ne réussit pas de cette manière, il doit donner au père, à la mère, au tuteur ou gardien de l’enfant absent de l’école et tenu de la fréquenter, un avis spécial.</p>	<p>“290r. The attendance officer shall make use of persuasion and, if that does not succeed, he shall give a special notice to the father, mother, tutor or guardian of the child who is absent from school though obliged to attend.</p>	Special notice.
Amende pour parents.	<p>“290s. Le père, la mère, le tuteur ou gardien qui ayant reçu l’avis visé à l’article précédent, ne fait pas en sorte que son enfant tenu de fréquenter l’école y soit présent tous les jours de classe, est passible sur poursuite sommaire, d’une amende d’au plus vingt dollars pour chaque infraction.</p>	<p>“290s. Any father, mother, tutor or guardian of a child obliged to attend school, who has received the notice contemplated by the preceding section and does not see that his child goes to school every school-day, shall be liable, on summary proceeding, to a fine of not more than twenty dollars for each offence.</p>	Fine against parents.
Caution au lieu d’amende.	<p>La cour ou le juge peut, au lieu d’imposer une amende, exiger d’une personne trouvée coupable de l’infraction prévue au présent article, qu’elle souscrive avec une ou plusieurs cautions, une obligation de payer une somme n’excédant pas cent dollars si l’enfant y désigné ne fréquente pas l’école suivant les prescriptions de la présente section.</p>	<p>The court or judge may, instead of imposing a fine, require any person found guilty of the offence contemplated in this section to sign a bond, with one or more sureties, to pay a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars if the child therein mentioned does not attend school in accordance with the requirements of this division.</p>	Bond in lieu of fine.
Poursuites par contrôleur ou inspecteur.	<p>“290t. La poursuite prévue à l’article précédent est intentée par le contrôleur d’absences ou par l’inspecteur d’écoles, lequel peut également donner l’avis spécial prévu à l’article 290r.</p>	<p>“290t. The proceedings contemplated in the foregoing section shall be brought by the attendance officer or by the school inspector, who may also give the special notice contemplated in section 290r.</p>	Power to take proceedings, etc.
Âge présumé.	<p>“290u. Dans toute poursuite pour infraction aux dispositions de la présente section, l’âge de l’enfant sera, à moins de preuve contraire, censé être celui qu’indique son apparence.</p>	<p>“290u. In all proceedings for offences against the provisions of this division, the child’s age shall be deemed to be such as his appearance indicates, failing proof to the contrary.</p>	Presumption as to age.
Fêtes religieuses.	<p>“290v. Aucune poursuite ne sera intentée par suite de l’absence d’un enfant de l’école pendant une journée considérée comme un jour de fête par l’église ou congrégation religieuse à laquelle il appartient.</p>	<p>“290v. No proceedings shall be taken by reason of the absence of a child from school on a day regarded as a holiday by the church or religious congregation to which he belongs.</p>	Religious holidays.

Liste des  
absents,  
etc.

“**290w.** L’instituteur ou le directeur de toute école doit, chaque semaine pendant que l’école est en activité, donner au contrôleur d’absences, les nom et prénom, âge et adresse de tous les enfants inscrits à cette école et qui en ont été absents ou expulsés et fournir, sur demande, tous autres renseignements que le contrôleur d’absences exige.

“**290w.** The teacher or principal of every school shall, every week while the school is open, give the attendance officer the full name, age and address of every child enrolled in such school who has been absent or expelled therefrom, and shall furnish on demand such other information as the attendance officer may require.

List of  
absentees,  
etc.

Peine pour  
négligence.

“**290x.** Tout secrétaire-trésorier, contrôleur d’absences, instituteur ou directeur d’écoles qui refuse ou néglige d’accomplir les devoirs qui lui sont imposés par la présente section, de même que toute personne qui met obstacle à l’accomplissement de tels devoirs, sont passibles, sur poursuite sommaire, d’une amende n’excédant pas vingt dollars.

“**290x.** Every secretary-treasurer, attendance officer, teacher or school principal who refuses or neglects to perform the duties imposed upon him by this division, and every person who hinders the performance of such duties, shall be liable, on summary proceeding, to a fine of not more than twenty dollars.

Fine for  
neglect of  
duties.

Emploi  
des amendes.

“**290y.** Les amendes imposées en vertu de la présente section sont versées au fonds local de la commission scolaire concernée.”

“**290y.** The fines imposed under this division shall form part of the local fund of the school board concerned.”

Use of  
fines.

Entrée en  
vigueur.

**S.** La présente loi entrera en vigueur le premier juillet 1943.

**S.** This act shall come into force on the first day of July, 1943.

Coming  
into force.

## Abstract

I will demonstrate in this thesis that the man most responsible for the passage of compulsory education in the Province of Quebec in 1943 was the Honorable Hector Perrier, Provincial Secretary in the Liberal Cabinet of the Honorable Adelard Godbout from October, 1940 until August, 1944. I will show that Perrier's successful campaign to obtain passage of compulsory education was considerably aided by Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve of Quebec, who led the Catholic Committee of the Council of Education in endorsing the principle of compulsory education. I will also undertake to illustrate that this decision signaled a reversal of the same Committee's stand only twenty years earlier.

In the opening chapter, I discuss the outlines of the Catholic educational system in Quebec as it took shape after 1867, and look into the extent to which the State conceded the upper hand to the Church in the field of education. In addition, this section of the thesis contains a brief discussion of attempts to enact compulsory education prior to 1943. Chapter two introduces Perrier and demonstrates how his election as Provincial Secretary in October, 1940 gave him the opportunity to translate a long-standing interest in educational reform and in the need to correct declining attendance at the primary school level in particular into a compulsory education law three years later. The steps he undertook between 1940-1943 in conjunction with Cardinal Villeneuve and Honorable Victor Doré, Superintendent of Education for the Province of Quebec from 1939-1946, to secure the approval of the Catholic Committee for compulsory education are traced.

In the third chapter, I look into the debate in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council which preceded the adoption of compulsory education. Perrier's role as the leading spokesman for the government will be brought out. Moreover, the chapter demonstrates that the Catholic Committee's approval of the principle of the bill effectively precluded any criticism of Perrier's bill on statistical or doctrinal grounds, and that the bill passed relatively easily. In the final chapter, I examine the attitude of the six French-language, metropolitan newspapers in Montreal and Quebec. All but one approved of the Catholic Committee's and the government's decision in favour of compulsory education. The importance of the support of L'Action Catholique, the spokesman for the Cardinal of Quebec, for the government's measure is stressed.