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TORONTO, JANUARY 28, 1886.

WE notice in some of our exchanges a revival of the old discussion upon the injustice of the Legislature giving large aid to high schools and collegiate institutes, and comparatively less aid to public schools. Speaking in round numbers the amount granted by the Legislature to public schools is \$250,000; to high schools and collegiate institutes, \$85,000. The number of public school pupils is 465,000; the average number in attendance, 215,000. The number of high school and collegiate institute pupils is 12,000; the average number in attendance, 6,600. Calculating upon the average attendance, a public school pupil receives of legislative aid, \$1.17; a high school pupil, \$12.88. That is, a public school pupil receives but one-eleventh of the amount a high school pupil receives.

AT first sight this disproportion seems very wrong, and we do not intend to attempt to justify it. What the exact proportion should be can be but arbitrarily settled. There is no general principle that can be referred to to determine the matter. But the general principles upon which government aid is given at all, as a supplement to local effort,

are these:—First, to make the blessing of education *general*—to place education within the reach of poor as well as of rich; second, to regulate its *quality*, to control the work of education in such a way that the very best value shall be given to the people in return for their expenditure. We know of no other reasons why the central government should interfere with local authorities in the matter at all; but these are sufficient, because local authorities would not be always able, nor would they be always willing, to see to it that the education which they unaided would give to the people, would be available alike to rich and to poor, and would be of sufficiently good quality. By making the system general and provincial rather than allowing it to remain disintegrated, divided into an infinite number of local systems, the Legislature is able to secure these two advantages, general diffusion and excellence of quality.

BUT it so happens that in the matter of primary education the people generally are agreed as to its necessity. We mean that in the great majority of cases local authorities, reflecting the opinions of the people who elect them, are as much in earnest in making primary education accessible to all, as the Government of the whole country could possibly be. In primary education the reasons for the Government's interference in its administration are reduced to *one*, viz., the securing of general excellence of quality. If the legislative aid to public schools were entirely cut off to-morrow not one school in one hundred would be closed. Even this would be lamentable, but it is a small proportion; and the consideration shows us how universal with us has the belief in the necessity of free education become. But the continuance of the grant to public schools enables the Government to maintain its control of the system and thereby secure its general efficiency.

BUT respecting secondary education things are very different. In the first place, the usual laws of supply and demand do not hold in regard to it. There are very few communities where secondary education of good quality could be afforded, if it depended for its support alone upon the fees of those who are able and willing to pay for it. The history of education everywhere proves this conclusively. The great majority of our towns and villages could not provide any except the poorest; and even in large

towns and cities only the wealthy would be able to avail themselves of its benefits. And yet it is agreed to by wise thinkers all the world over that that nation is most blessed whose educational advantages, even the highest, are within the hope and reach of its humblest citizens—not without struggle and hardship it may be, but still within hope of attainment, by the very poorest. But leaving out of consideration the blessing a country possesses when its poorest sons may reasonably hope to be able to prepare themselves for any profession or station in life to which they think their abilities justify them in aspiring—leaving this out of consideration, we say, though we should not, for it is of incalculable importance, there still remains the necessity of the nation properly providing in its secondary schools for the instruction of the great body of its youth in the primary schools, that is—providing for the education of its vast army of teachers; and this necessity makes it incumbent upon the national government to see to it that secondary education is almost as freely accessible and as generally diffused as elementary education. But secondary education is necessarily more expensive than primary education, and, as we have said before, is in far greater danger of being starved for lack of local support—the necessity for it being not so generally acknowledged as that of primary education, and, what is worse, public opinion in regard to it, especially local public opinion, being very subject to variation and whim, affected as local opinion often is, by the arguments of the illiberal or the illiterate, put forward either in self-interest or in ignorance—so that what the Government must do for secondary education, what with wise forethought and the approval of all patriotic people it must do, is far more, proportionately, than what it need do for primary education; hence, even if a high school pupil receives out of the public chest eleven times that which a public school pupil receives the disproportion is not at all out of the way.

IT is for those who have faith in the virtue of education to assist in helping to keep public opinion right in this matter. It is not a question of high *versus* primary schools; but of higher education, of good quality, within the reach of the poorest and the humblest, *versus* higher education of inferior quality, and that within the reach of none but the well-to-do.