

absolute control, but ill bore the restraints which had been put upon him by the Act of 1874, that which inaugurated the system.

There are four distinct periods in our educational history, which we must fully understand before we can talk intelligently upon improvements or changes in our present system. It is for lack of knowledge of these that so many reason wrongly when discussing educational matters. I will briefly outline them.

(1) *From Dr. Ryerson's entering upon office in 1844 to Confederation, in 1867—twenty-three years.* During this long period, and especially toward the end of it, Dr. Ryerson was at the head of educational affairs for Upper Canada. The various Governments of the day were so engrossed in administering the common concerns of the two Provinces, that they left to the Chief Superintendent for Upper Canada almost the entire management of the school system of his Province. He had a small council of advisers, but these were his own nominees, and their duties were principally to secure equality of religious instruction to the various denominations, and to lend the weight of their scholarship and influence to the regulations which were framed by their chief.

(2) *From Confederation to 1874—seven years.* During this period the Government of Ontario had public instruction within the province of its authority, but the system of administration remained the same as before. It was during these seven years that Dr. Ryerson became dissatisfied with his position. He was believed by the party in power at the end of this period to be a partisan of the opposing party. He was disposed to be somewhat arbitrary in his opinions and acts, and the Government of the day little cared to give legislative sanction to his measures, without exercising their undoubted right to criticise and

change them. They could scarcely be blamed for so desiring to exercise this right, for the Chief Superintendent still remained practically an unadvised executive officer, with large supplementary legislative powers. By virtue of his position, he certainly did know a great deal of the needs of the people in educational matters, but it was not as it had been thirty years before; there were other men quite as competent to judge of the probable working of an educational measure as he; and there were many educational interests besides those of the more elementary, common-school character, which had formed a large part of his previous experience. And the Government, recognizing this, did really put themselves in opposition to him very frequently. What may have been the motives which inspired the attack we need not stay to inquire into, but both Dr. Ryerson and his system were, in 1871, violently criticized by the *Globe* newspaper, and the school system and its administration strongly animadverted upon by Mr. Blake, then in opposition in the Legislature. Dr. Ryerson no less violently rejoined, and in 1872 were published that somewhat famous series of letters by him, concerning the late Mr. Brown and the *Globe* newspaper, which, whatever may have been the truth they contained, certainly had the effect of making a party question of educational matters, and of establishing the belief, which had already obtained some credence, that the head of the school administration was a political partisan. It was in the beginning of this year, too, that Dr. Ryerson proposed to Mr. Blake, then President of the Council, that the Government should assume entire control of the educational system, and that Mr. Blake should be Minister of Education. Mr. Blake, who had not forgotten Dr. Ryerson's strictures of the preceding year, wrote, in reply,