

Protestant Council of Education, created by the Legislature, they determine the curriculum to be followed and they select their own text books. In Ontario the Government remains clothed with full authority over all schools, public and separate. The Department of Education has the sole control in the administration of the schools. Up to August 1913, the regulation which touched upon the teaching of French in the schools read as follows:

Regulation 15.

"In school sections when the French and German language prevail, the trustees may, in addition to the course of the study prescribed for public schools, require instruction to be given in reading, grammar and composition to such pupils as are directed by their parents or guardians to study either of these languages and in all such cases the authorized text books in French or German shall be used."

This enactment was but the confirmation of the use of French in the education of the French-speaking children in Ontario schools prior to Confederation. This regulation was replaced by Regulation 17, dated August 1913, which has for its sole purpose the regulation of the teaching of French in certain schools called English-French schools. It is therein provided that French children may learn their own language besides the English language.

Before proceeding to examine the conditions which, in virtue of this regulation, will govern the teaching of French in Ontario, I want first to find out if we are agreed upon the same purpose. If we are not pursuing the same end, if we have not the same object in view, any further discussion is useless. What does the French Canadian father want? He wants his child to learn his mother tongue and the English language as well. What does the Ontario Government want? What is its policy? I take it to be expressed in the terms of its regulations, as follows:

1st English shall be taught to all the children frequenting the public and separate schools.

2nd French may also be taught to the children of such parents who desire it, under certain conditions.

It does not enter into my mind to question the sincerity of the Ontario Government. Since it frames rules for the teaching of English and French, I must conclude that its purpose is to allow adequate means to attain that object. The Government wants, first, all children to learn the English language. I take it for granted that all French parents in Ontario are agreed upon that point.

The controversy does not begin here. Government further says that French may also be taught to the children of parents who desire it.

If Regulation 17 was silent as to the conditions under which this French teaching was to be given it would be clear to any ordinary being that the teaching of French was meant to be effective. A teaching which does not teach is a misnomer. Once I am allowed to learn French, that teaching must be adequate, else it is a sham.

In effect, the Ontario Government's edict is that every child shall learn English and may learn French as well. This is as it should be. The child who speaks two languages is better equipped than if he only spoke one. This order is naturally construed by the French Canadian population in Ontario in much stricter terms and they take it to mean, in their own case, that every child shall learn the French and English languages. They are perfectly agreeable to and desirous of their children acquiring a knowledge of the majority in addition to their own mother tongue.

If the French speaking minority is in complete accord with the Ontario Government upon the essential element or matter of the policy, where lies the difficulty or disagreement which we hear so much about?

It suffices to read but cursorily that Regulation 17 to reach the conclusion that its rigorous application would deprive the French speaking child of any fair knowledge of his own language. That child may only be taught in his own tongue during the first form, that is during the first two years of schooling, if it is deemed necessary by the chief inspector and, thereafter, in the other forms, he may have French tuition for a fraction of an hour each day. If, after the first form, his knowledge of English is still insufficient, the language of communication may be the French during an hour or rather a fraction of an hour at the discretion of the chief inspector.

This means that the child will be taught French and English through the medium of the French language when it is deemed that he would be unable to understand the lesson if given in English. The chief inspector will, arbitrarily decide upon that point.

Regulation 17 assumes that the French child will have learnt during the first two years sufficient English to understand the teacher, and that thereafter he will have enough of a fraction of an hour of French tuition each day to learn his own language.