

which gives a certain guarantee of a steady progression to still higher improvements.

They have great pleasure in availing themselves of this opportunity of pointing out to you the very great change which has taken place in this community, in favour of Free Schools,—a change, they have no doubt, in a great measure produced by your able advocacy of the principle that Free Schools are essential to the perfect education of a people. The schools in this Municipality are now Free, and are so by the voice of a large majority of the people themselves, deliberately declared at a protracted and keenly contested election of Trustees, of two days duration, in January last.

Anticipating much benefit to the cause of education, and much pleasure from the interchange of views and feelings on this first visit to our highly favoured County, we beg to tender you our best wishes that every happiness and success, with the Divine blessing of Providence, may attend you in the good work in which you are so earnestly engaged.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and School Officers of the Town of Simcoe,

WM. M. WILSON,  
Chairman Board Trustees of Common Schools, Simcoe.

STEPHEN J. FULLER,  
Secretary and Treasurer.

Simcoe, County Norfolk,  
Feb'y. 10, 1853.

## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

### COUNTY SCHOOL CONVENTIONS.

[From the *Toronto Examiner*, of the 23rd February.]

The nature of the proceedings reported in the School Convention which will be found elsewhere in our columns, gives it a character of more than sectional or local interest. The school system of Upper Canada finds in the Chief Superintendent an exponent of no mean abilities. In saying this, we do not profess ourselves admirers of some of the provisions of that system; much less of the public movements of its author; but recent events in our educational economy have tended, we must admit, to harmonize his views with popular feeling in this Province; and wherever his efforts are directed to the development and preservation of common educational institutions, he will readily have the sympathies and co-operation of the great bulk of the people of Western Canada.

[From the *Canadian Free Press*, of the 17th February.]

In this number we publish the minutes of the School Convention held in this town, on the 8th instant, by the Rev. Dr. Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Schools. The Rev. Dr. since his appointment to the office which he now holds, has been indefatigable in the discharge of his duties, has made himself, by foreign travel, and personal observation of the various European systems, as well as by diligent study, perfectly conversant with the subject of public education; and has largely infused into the common school system of Canada the results of his knowledge and experience. It is somewhat gratifying to know, and not a little flattering to our pride, that our system is favourably noticed by educationists in other states, (a fact fully brought out by the Superintendent in the course of his observations,) and that we are probably in advance of some older states in which a system of common school education has been much longer established, with ever-accumulating facilities for still more rapid progression in our onward march. Taking the educational institutions of this country as a whole, we do not think there is much for us to envy in the kindred institutions of other countries, whether in Europe or America—a fact which casts a beam of light upon the glorious future of Canada. This is attributable to the prevailing public sentiment which has long existed in Canada in favour of large facilities for the education of the young—and whatever scheme has at any time been proposed, either by the Government or others, likely to contribute effectually to this end, has been warmly and generously supported. The labours of such a man as Dr. Ryerson could not fail to be crowned with triumphant success—as the labours of the skilful husbandman expended upon a generous and prolific soil. The country was fortunate in securing the services of a man so eminently qualified to discharge the duties, in the educational department imposed upon him by the Representative of the Sovereign, and he was fortunate in having a suitable and fertile field upon which to bestow his labours. It is now upwards of ten years since an Act was passed for the establishment of Common Schools in Canada, and since that time progressive improvements have been made in harmonizing the system with the municipal institutions of the country, rectifying its details and rendering it more comprehensive and efficient in its char-

acter. For most of its improvements it has been indebted to the Chief Superintendent; *et honor cui honor debetur*. That it has yet been fully perfected, is more than could be expected, considering the difficulty of the task of engrafting a *system of education*—in great part supported by the voluntary contributions or voluntary taxation of the people—upon our liberal and highly democratic institutions, so as to be at the same time popular and efficient—sufficiently concentrative to give it vitality, strength of action, and uniformity—and sufficiently diffusive in its character and management to render it completely under popular control.

Under these circumstances the educationist or the politician cannot sit down and form a theory such as he might think abstractly the best: but the best that can be carried out in the nature of the case. That our school laws and system of education are still susceptible of much improvement, is very likely felt by the Chief Superintendent; and the object of his journey through the Province, and of the series of school conventions recently held, was to elicit public opinion as to the working of the system; its deficiencies, and the measures to be adopted for still farther perfecting it. The resolutions passed at the "convention," which was unanimously attended by the trustees and teachers of the county, will afford some idea to the reader of the practical results of the meeting, as far as regards the expression of public opinion; but the proceedings should have been reported, in order to give any idea of the interest awakened by the lucid exposition of the principles of the school law, by the Chief Superintendent, and ready and satisfactory answers to such questions regarding its working as were propounded for solution. During the convention an interesting discussion was excited by the Rev. Mr. Pollard, desiring to be informed what provision was made in the law for the *introduction of the religious element* into our common schools. The Dr. entered into a full exposition of the law, and of the regulations of the Council of Public Instruction upon this point, from which he proved that ample provision was there made, but that as to the manner in which it should be carried out, it was left to the local Board of Trustees, the presumed exponents of public sentiment. He defended at length, and to our mind with perfect success, the wisdom of the law, in reference to religious instruction, as it exists, and its adaptation to the peculiar circumstances of the country.

### FREE SCHOOLS IN UPPER CANADA.

[From the *Huron Signal* of Thursday, Jan. 20, 1853.]

The annual public school meeting was held at Goderich, on Saturday, the 15th inst., at which the great principle of Free Schools was discussed. We are glad to record that benevolence, intelligence, and social and Christian duty have triumphed. Free schools have gradually been gaining the ascendancy throughout the Province, and in scanning the pages of the Report of the Chief Superintendent of Schools for the year 1851, we are much pleased with the weight and multiplicity of the testimony adduced from the reports of Local Superintendents and Boards of School Trustees in favor of this truly benevolent, patriotic, and national principle.

We have ever regarded elementary education as a national work, a work which it ought to be the pride, as it is the interest, of the nation to carry out thoroughly. We will not enter here into the examination of the powerful arguments which have proved the desirableness of national education; this has been acknowledged in every civilized country where any other than a despotic government exists. The theory is no longer tenable that "education makes people difficult to govern;" but it is the anxiety, as it is the duty of every enlightened statesman, not only by education to fit the mass of the people to be governed, but also to prepare them to take part in the government of their country.

The work being a national one, the development of the system nationally adopted ought to be the care of every locality. It is true that the law of the land, although it provides for, does not yet oblige us to have free schools; but judging from the testimony in the report of the Chief Superintendent, as well as from our own observation, it will not be long before the laws of our country will determine that education shall be free—that however diversified the pecuniary positions of our population may be, with regard to the ability to obtain an education all shall be placed upon an equal footing. This is what we fondly anticipate, and every man of intelligence will agree with us, that there should be no embargo upon education, but that, like the air we breathe, it should be free to be inhaled by all. The earnest desire, then, of the friends of humanity and education in every locality, will be to introduce in its most liberal phase, our certainly very superior system of provincial education. They will be encountered by much selfishness, and in many localities by that worst manifestation of selfishness—sectarianism. School Trustees and others having influence in the management of our public schools, should remember that their duty is a public one, and that they should so control the schools committed to their charge, that the whole population of every persuasion