

opinion, however, has existed among the most zealous friends of popular public instruction, as to the best mode in which they should be provided for and afforded.

While many have advocated by the policy of establishing and carrying out a universal system of education, by the authority and aid of government, others have objected to any interference whatever from that quarter in the matter, contending that the public should be left to supply themselves with the means and facilities of instruction, as they are left to provide themselves with the necessities and conveniences of life. Numerous and various arguments have been adduced on both sides of the controversy, but, though the question cannot be said to be entirely free from difficulty, it is, in our judgment, idle to suppose that so great a desideratum as the sound instruction of all residents in every locality throughout the country can, or will, be provided for, and supplied by the efforts and benevolence of private individuals. The cause of popular education is one for which all cannot be done that is required, without a hearty co-operation on the part of the Executive and the Legislature, as well as among the inhabitants of the Country at large. The conjoint and energetic efforts of every department of the State are indispensable to success in a work of such magnitude and difficulty.

THE PAST AND PRESENT PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN UPPER CANADA.

It is now about thirty years since Common Schools were established by Law in Upper Canada. The first Act of the Legislature was passed in 1816, under the reign of George the Third of blessed memory. This Act continued in operation with some amendments, up to the period of 1841, but being considered defective, a new Act was passed in that year, which was also found, on trial, to be imperfect, and in the autumn of 1843 the provisions of the present Statute were enacted, in which, it must be admitted, great improvement in our system of Common Schools has been effected.

In the enactments of the different laws for the establishment and operation of Common Schools in Upper Canada, the authorities of our Country have shewn themselves fully alive to the importance of maturing a system, such as would, if possible, be in consonance with the views, and adapted to promote the interests, present and prospective, of all classes of the community, and, to a good extent, their exertions in this philanthropic work have been successful. . . . Being liberally endowed, as are all the Common Schools of the Province, it is most desirable, without encouraging too much legislation on the subject, that the existing system should be remedied of its evils by being made more simple, and yet comprehensive, and thus placed in every respect upon such a basis as will command the influence of a sound and enlightened public sentiment, emanating from, and pervading the entire mass of society. Towards the attainment of this result, the expectations of the friends of education generally are now most anxiously directed, and from such a consummation much good is confidently anticipated. . . .

Accompanying this Report is a Draught of a Bill, embodying all the changes that, in my opinion, it would be advisable, under present circumstances, for the Legislature to make in the existing law of 1843.

[NOTE.—This Draft of Bill is omitted, as the Chief Superintendent had not seen it.]

Another evil, and one to which I have not before alluded in the course of this Report, requiring a remedy, is the almost endless variety of Text Books in use in a large portion of the Common Schools, and the entire want of adaptation of many of them to the capacity of pupils, and especially to the circumstances of the Canadian youth.

This diversity of text-books renders classification in the schools impossible, fritters away the time and paralyzes the energies of Teachers, represses the ambition and retards the progress of scholars, and deprives the School Section in no small degree of the advantage which should be received from the money paid for instruction. Nor will the grievance be likely to be redressed until the power of regulating the Course of Study,