

or to change their opinions if there were need to change them in order to arrive at the proper decision, if a reporter were sitting by to publish every word afterwards? That was the way with the Council of Public Instruction. Members coming from the country could not be well informed of the business beforehand; they had to learn the facts when they arrived, and they might express opinions which in the course of discussion they might find it right to change, but it was very difficult to change an opinion after it had been taken down. His opinion was that if reporters were present the debates of the Council would be of much less practical value. There was another danger. He hoped that in time public education and other beneficent institutions would improve their politics; but now they wanted to confine them to their own sphere. They did not want them in their soup or in their education. He believed that if they had reporters taking down the debates, and the newspapers commenting on them afterwards, it would be very difficult to keep out politics. He did not say this on mere speculation. Not long ago a question was raised about a debate in the Board on the subject of the Depository, and if they remembered the comments of the two leading newspapers on that occasion, they would recollect that they both fixed upon the objects of their political aversion for attack. At present the Board was not political. Politics were excluded from it. (Cheers.) It was governed entirely—whether it went right or wrong—by the interests of education. That, he thought, in this political world was a valuable characteristic, and one which he should not like needlessly to endanger. He was as great a friend of publicity as could be, and if there was any ground for supposing that the Board did not deliberate honestly, or played tricks with the public, by all means let the doors be thrown open and the reporters admitted, but the object was not that it should talk well, but that it should work well, and reporting was a great impediment to work. The most important work the Council had done during the year had been the revision of text books. They were all aware that in that as in every department of this great and complex system change ought to be very cautious, but the text-books must be kept up to the level of the age, and the Council could not be responsible for anything else. (Cheers.) He knew there had been a great desire for a new or revised geography (hear, hear), and that had been put in hand under good auspices. Then the grammar was considered to need a change. (Hear, hear.) That change had been made, and a grammar introduced the best the Council could select, although he feared it might at first present a rather novel arrangement and nomenclature. It was very difficult to find a good English grammar. Most grammars had been written by people who had studied the inflected languages and thought English was inflected, though, unfortunately, they knew that it was not. People who had studied Greek and Latin, especially Greek, looked for their forms everywhere. The Greek was perfectly homogeneous, almost perfectly inflected, and in forms and modes of thought far superior to any modern language. English was very different, being exceedingly heterogeneous and not inflected. Another class of text-books taken up for revision was the history books. They had found no really good history of Canada for the use of schools, and had had to invite the learned men of the Province to turn their attention to it, but he doubted if anything very valuable in the way of a text-book would be produced, in consequence of the disconnected character of our past history. With regard to English history, would there was some one who with the knowledge of the present day united the talent of Goldsmith, and would give us such a narrative as his histories were. All historical writing was now affected by the question whether history was a science, and to be treated as one in the same way as the physical sciences. Mr. Buckle thought it was, but he (Mr. Smith) was not satisfied that it was so, because he had not yet found any explanation of the phenomena of conscience and moral responsibility, which seemed to exclude free will, and if they admitted free will there was something in the phenomena of human action, of which history was made up, which was different from the phenomena of the scientific world, and repelled the scientific treatment applicable to it. Still, no doubt scientific habits and methods had told a good deal upon the treatment of history, so that if it had not become more scientific it had at least become more philosophical, less what might be termed the “drum and trumpet history,” and more the history of opinions and institutions. This affected the larger histories more than the text-books, but it affected all to a certain extent. There was, however, one element in history which was not affected by any question as to its being a science—that was the ethical part, the presentation of human character in great persons and great events, and that was the part most suited to children, and most required in any text-book adopted by the Council. Another class of books about which he had heard a good deal said in the local associations, and which must probably come on some day for inspection, if not for revision, was the reading books. (Hear, hear.) His own inspection of them led him to sympathise with those who thought a change should be made, but before acting they must settle some principle on which they should act. Was the object to be purely literary, simply to teach reading, or to convey specific information at the same time? Although the two objects might not be absolutely incompatible, yet they would frame a very different set of books if they went on one principle or the other. That must be determined again by another question as to the “programme”—whether some subjects now upon it should be left there or not. If the scientific or philosophical subjects now introduced in the programme were removed, there would be an additional reason to introduce them into the reading books, and so convey information no longer given in any other way. Another point to which the attention of the Council was incidentally turned, was the relations between the text-books and religious

teaching, and the conclusion to which the Council came in substance was, that it would desire all text-books, and books emanating from it, to be pervaded by the sentiment of a Christian community (cheers), but it would not introduce into them anything in the way of dogma—anything of a denominational or sectarian kind. He considered the latter provision to be sound and valuable. Some said not without plausibility—“The Roman Catholics have their Separate Schools; the rest are Protestants; and we may introduce into them all doctrines in which all Protestants agree, or to which none strongly object.” That, in the first place, was stereotyping a system which, after all, he hoped was merely a concession to a temporary need. He thought our Legislature acted wisely in instituting Separate Schools. He thought they must look facts in the face, and must consider how difficult it would have been to get the Roman Catholic portion of their population to co-operate in any sort of national system unless they had made that concession. He did not say the propriety would be so clear if the aggressive spirit lately shown by the Ultramontane party were to spread through this country. He thought then the relations of the Roman Catholics towards the Government and society in general would be open to question. As things had been, however, he thought it wise, but he did not want to stereotype it—he did not want to write over all the public schools “This is a school which the Roman Catholic cannot enter.” The address which he made to them last year had called down some sharp criticisms from ecclesiastical quarters, to which he thought it better not to reply. They had come from his excellent friend the Archbishop of Toronto, his excellent friend the Provost of Trinity College, and from a High Church clergyman of the Church of England, who wrote over his initials in the *Mail*. They would see that all these criticisms came virtually from the same quarter—but they would bear him witness that he spoke as strongly as it was possible to speak on the importance of religious education, and that he said he looked forward earnestly to the day when not only would education be religious, but they would be able to reintroduce religion into the teaching of their public schools, instead of the present system of secular education in the schools and religious education at home and in the Sunday school, which was the result of a time of religious perplexity and division, when it was impossible to get people to be all taught the same creed. But what those gentlemen all wanted was not religious but clerical education—education under the control of the clergy. The Catholic Archbishop had more than once poured balms upon his head from the height of his pulpit, but in the Council they met on the most friendly terms and in the most friendly manner. (Cheers.) The Provost of Trinity College commenced mildly, but he warmed as he went on, and the High Church rector was, he might say, personal, but ascribed that only to his piety. With regard to the Archbishop's criticisms, if he thought it quite certain that clerical control over education was really conducive to the interests of popular education, he would only like him to look at Spain and her colonies, Portugal, Brittany, Italy, the Roman Catholic parts of Belgium, and the other countries where clerical education had been most complete, and tell him honestly what had been the results. The Provost's principal objection was that he had underrated the activity of the Established Church of England in regard to popular education. Let him distinguish the Establishment, which was a political institution, from the Church. The Church, when it became political, and political power was placed in its hands, seemed to him to suffer by what it thought to be an accession of power. The Provost's statement that the Church of England had taken up the matter of popular education before the close of the war against revolutionary France was literally correct. But that war divided itself into two parts. The first was the struggle against revolutionary France and the French Republic, and then the Tory or High Church reaction in England was very high indeed. Afterwards it was a struggle against Napoleon, and then the reaction became less violent. After the struggle ceased the liberal or progressive movement began again, and he contended that it brought with it popular education. In support of this statement he quoted a passage from Lord Russell's “Recollections and Suggestions.” The new High School scheme was likely, he thought, to fulfil its purpose. They had learnt from the newspapers that a question had arisen about the Depository. A committee was appointed to enquire into the Depository, and to consider its relations to the book trade and its general utility to present circumstances. He consented to serve on the committee while doubting whether the Council had, under the Act defining its powers, power to carry through that enquiry effectually. The question was ultimately raised, and he could not say positively that it had power, after a satisfactory enquiry, to make a complete report, and so, instead of voting for the reception of that report, he was very glad to vote for a reference to the Government, suggesting that, as the institution was one of an exceptional kind, and the trade which it affected felt and expressed itself aggrieved at its interference, it was desirable for the Government from time to time to enquire into it in order to see that it fulfilled the purposes of its institution and did not interfere with any established trade. The report contained an explanation by the Office of the uses of the Depository, and a defence of it as an institution. He did not mean to say that there was not a great deal in that defence. His mind was entirely free from prejudice on the question, but he thought the institution should be subjected to occasional enquiry. It was true that Government built ships and manufactured arms in its own yards, because they were absolutely necessary, and private traders could not be relied on to supply them when wanted, or of the exact description required, but books were sure to be provided by the trade. The book trade was the natural organ for the