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ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOL LAW.

In the recent able and interesting debate in the House of Assembly on the School Bill some points relating to the administration of the School Law were incidentally touched upon. The principles laid down in these incidental references to the subject were quite in harmony with those which have governed the Education Department since the School Law of 1850 was passed.

It was especially gratifying to notice the absence of party-feeling in the discussion. It was felt in the House to be a subject on which all parties should unite as Canadians, and not by making it a party or political question to imperil an interest so vitally important as that of our schools.

In circulars to Local School authorities and in the letters from the Chief Superintendent the doctrine laid down, or the counsel given, has invariably been that, in carrying out the law and regulations, great judgment and discretion were necessary:—That the great purpose of the Department was not to seek to control but to assist trustees, inspectors and others in their efforts to improve the character and condition of the Schools; to build up and render still more effective the educational system of our country, and to aid them in every practicable way, through themselves, in attaining these very desirable objects.

Of course, no one objects to a law under which Schools shall be regulated; and no one objects to the necessary regulations, pro-

grammes and course of studies designed to carry that law into effect; nor does any one object that that law and those regulations should be distinct and definite in themselves. The objection urged was either that the regulations were too rigid, that they were not flexible enough to meet particular and special cases, or that Inspectors, supposed to be acting under instructions, were neither disposed to relax the letter of the regulations, nor to take into account peculiar cases or the necessities of particular Schools. Other minor objections were urged founded on individual cases, but these were the principal ones stated.

We were glad to have been able thus to learn the views of members, and to know what was the general feeling on the subject which they represented. The statements made by some of the members were a matter of surprise and regret, especially as great care had been taken to counsel moderation and leniency in carrying out the law. Thus in regard to School-house accommodation the following extract from Department notices on the subject was published in this *Journal* from time to time:—

“In many School sections the School-house has been allowed to remain in the same state for fifteen or twenty years and longer, often on a bare open space, or on the road-side unenclosed, without a tree or shrub near by to shade it, or any provision being made by the Trustees for the convenience or health of the pupils, or even for their observance of the decencies of life. The Legislature has wisely decided that this state of things shall not continue, but that, as soon as possible, a remedy shall be applied, where necessary. *A reasonable time should, of course, be allowed to Trustees in all cases to set things right; but in the meantime Inspectors will, we trust, not fail to urge upon Trustees the necessity of complying, as soon as possible, with the provisions of the law on this subject.*” Again, subsequently:

“The regulations, which define what ‘adequate School Accommodations’ are, suggest a medium or minimum amount of School Accommodation to be provided, as compared with the law and regulations on the subject in other countries. Although the law is imperative, yet Inspectors will exercise a judicious discrimination in enforcing.”

The Department is not aware of any cases in which Inspectors have withheld an apportionment from the Trustees of Schools, in consequence of their non compliance with the regulations; but they have, so far as we know, in every case sought counsel and advice