

A RESUME OF THE OTTAWA SCHOOL QUESTION

BEING PART OF THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE
ENGLISH TRUSTEES, APRIL 29, 1914.

The English Committee of the Separate School Trustees of the City of Ottawa, consisting of Trustees MacKell, Sims, Lanigan, Brennan, O'Neill, and Finn, deems it necessary, in view of the gravity of the present Ottawa Separate School crisis, to make the following statement to the Board of Trustees and to the Separate School supporters of Ottawa.

We hold that the whole history of the Separate Schools in Ottawa, since the Separate Schools Act was passed in 1863 till the present, proves:

First,—That two classes of schools have always existed here—the English and the French, or Bilingual.

Secondly,—That separation of some sort, so that the English would control the English schools and the French the Bilingual schools, has always existed more or less perfectly.

Thirdly,—That the greater the separation the more successfully the schools can be run.

COMMITTEES ESTABLISHED.

In 1886 the Ottawa school system was raised out of the chaotic state into which it had fallen, by having the principle of separation or autonomy, applied not merely to control but also to finance, the Board having been resolved into two practically independent committees.

The English schools having greater financial resources, the French, coveting this, destroyed unfortunately in 1903, the independent committees. Later they permitted them to be restored as regards control, but not as regards finance.

ELECTION PRINCIPLE.

The principle that there should be one English and one French trustee from each ward has been recognized since 1863, when the English controlled four of the five wards. This principle implies that the English trustees should be nominated and elected exclusively by English-speaking voters, and the French trustees exclusively by French speaking electors. This principle was openly accepted in 1906 by the great leader of the French-Canadians, in school as well as religious and racial matters, the late Archbishop Duhamel. As far as the French trustees are concerned this principle is observed. There is not a French Trustee on the board who was not nominated by Frenchmen and elected by a majority of the French votes of his ward.

DISREGARD AGREEMENT.

On the other hand the French of this city, priests and people, relying on the weight of their numbers have decided to disregard this principle as far as English trustees are concerned. In the elections of April 25th, 1914, the two defeated English candidates had at least nine-tenths of the English votes. The French voters succeeded in electing two trustees not satisfactory to nine-tenths of the English-speaking ratepayers of these wards.

A FATAL POLICY.

This has intensified racial feeling tenfold and has driven a number of English supporters to the public schools. A policy which drives English Separate School supporters to the public schools is a fatal one. We now reiterate our claim, a claim which we have proved with great wealth of argument in our previous public statements to the press, that natural equity, business efficiency and civic peace require that the English Separate Schools and the Bilingual Separate Schools of this city should be under two mutually, functionally and financially independent boards or committees.