

majority of public schools, which become, by that very fact, absolutely **neutral**.

Thank God, our separate and public bilingual schools give a thorough religious education.

That, on the strength of this report, the commissioner's conclusion should indicate an educational **quasi-disaster** in our schools, is really a little too strong. It is worth while to take Dr. Merchant's somewhat pessimistic allegations one by one, in order to subject them to a close and minute examination.

II. REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL.

Dr. Merchant's statement: (a) "It became evident shortly after I began the inspection of the English-French schools of Essex, that I was likely to find unusual irregularities in the attendance of pupils, in both urban and rural schools, which might seriously affect their efficiency."³⁴ (b) "The regularity of attendance in the rural schools of Eastern Ontario is about the same as in rural schools in other parts of the Province, but in certain urban industrial centres, the attendance is unusually irregular."³⁵

The following extenuating circumstances are noted by Dr. Merchant:

(a) "Labour conditions in Essex and Kent are somewhat exceptional. A large proportion of the land in the French-Canadian settlements is given up to market gardening, or to the raising of crops such as tomatoes, corn and sugar-beets, which

³⁴Report, p. 20.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 21.