

THE ONTARIO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS—A REPLY.

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In advocating the affiliation of Voluntary Schools with our present Public School system in the Province of Ontario, one naturally expects to meet with some objections. It is, however, surprising that few, if any, of the criticisms appearing in both the secular and church press deal directly with the proposal, but are almost entirely based on prejudice. It is also somewhat surprising that when certain religious bodies are agitating for an opportunity to impart religious instructions in the Public Schools, yet the weekly papers that voice to some extent the mind of these religious bodies, are silent in regard to the Voluntary School proposal. The reason for this cannot but be due to the unanswerable arguments supporting the principle involved in the affiliation of Voluntary Schools with our Public School system.

Let me consider for a moment some of the criticisms that have appeared. In the *Toronto World* an editorial appears highly complimentary to the proposal. The editor readily admits that most of the advantages claimed for the affiliation of Voluntary Schools would result from the adoption of this proposal; but what are its difficulties? They may be summarized as follows: 1. Every Sunday-school would be turned into a day school. 2. Each denomination would have its own teachers. 3. The control of the whole system would pass into the hands of the clergy. 4. The Public School system would be jeopardized. If one will consider more carefully the first and last of these objections it would seem that the editor would fairly kill the proposal with kindness. For, according to his views, the affiliation of

Voluntary Schools would secure such great advantages that parents, now groaning under the restrictions and mechanical education of the Public School, would so gladly take advantage of the first opportunity offered them to secure better educational advantages that a general withdrawal of children from the present Public Schools would follow, with the result that nothing would be left for them to accomplish and the system as he terms it jeopardized. But this editor loses sight of the fact that even if the results he fears did follow, these Voluntary Schools are made part of the one Public School system, under proper inspection, maintaining the required standard of efficiency in the elementary work carried on in the Public Schools, and employing duly qualified teachers; while under existing circumstances parents being driven to seek an education for their children in private schools are cut off entirely from all connection with the national system. Does not his contention amount to this, that the only hope of maintaining the Public Schools as they exist to-day is by means of a high protective barrier shutting out all possible competition in private enterprise carried on to meet the reasonable demands of parents to secure a more liberal education for their children. On the other hand to object to denominational influence and clerical control, even if it is a valid objection, means, in one case, an intolerance of religion and in the other deprives certain members of our community of their citizenship; and this because they happen to be our religious advisers; which is an exaggeration of the same intolerance of religion. If