

# **THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OF ONTARIO (CANADA). ITS HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE FEATURES**

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The school system of Ontario (Canada). Its history and distinctive features by George W. Ross

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**GEORGE W. ROSS**

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FEATURES**



*INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SERIES*

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THE  
SCHOOL SYSTEM OF ONTARIO  
(CANADA)

*ITS HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE FEATURES*

BY

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THE SCHOOLS OF ENGLAND AND GERMANY

PATRIOTIC RECITATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, ETC.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THE publishers take pleasure in presenting a new volume in the fourth department of this series, that of Practice or Education as an art. This is a work on the organization and supervision of schools, and a most instructive one. After the history of educational theories and their criticism, one is prepared for a study of systematic treatises on the theory of pedagogy. Then come treatises on the art of instruction and discipline; and lastly, in our classification, works on the organization and supervision of schools.

Next after the study of school organization in the several States of our own country comes that of the colonies of Great Britain. Descended, like ourselves, from the people that invented local self-government, their solutions of the problem of popular education have in many respects the same features that we find in the United States. But, unlike our own people, these colonies have never passed through an epoch of revolution and become separate from the parental Government. From this circumstance flows a stream of results that mark considerable differences in practice.

It was natural that the people of our colonies should develop an almost morbid feeling against centralization. The true civil government is a proper balance between

centralization and individualism, the central power limiting itself to doing such things only as the individual can not do so well, and in all cases helping the individual to help himself. With our phobia against centralization, there have been frequent cases in which the central Government has failed to take the initiative in matters of great public concern. The individual has in many instances been left to suffer for his feebleness where he might have been re-enforced and made strong by the social whole. The consequence has been a slower growth in that function of our Government which, in the language of the Constitution, is "to provide for the public welfare."

The British colonies in many particulars furnish instances where the central power has acted more freely and provided for the public welfare more wisely than it has done with us.

Take, in the present volume, the account of the persistent attempt to secure the best method of supervision (Chapters I and II)—an attempt crowned with success. Take the record that describes the growth of the codes of comprehensive rules and regulations for the administration of details in localities. The central power sets the standards so that the local authority can readily see the ideal and criticise for itself its own results. The individual is left free in many details of method, but must secure a certain standard of success in what he accomplishes.

We may read with interest and profit the growth of the plan for the professional training of teachers; that for school libraries, and the final substitution of town or village public libraries; that for secondary and higher education; that for the provision of good text-books;

the care for equal justice in the matter of separate schools for religious denominations; the systematic modes of procedure in selecting schoolhouse sites and in adopting plans for building that secure the best hygiene for teacher and pupil.

Throughout this volume is seen what may be done by a central power that makes a liberal appropriation of money to local authorities, but requires, as a condition, the recipient to respond by contributing an equal sum of money, and by showing to the central supervisory power results that equal the standard of requirement. It may be doubted whether there is another instance in America of so wise a use of money and supervisory power as is shown in this Province of Ontario, excepting the administration of the Peabody and Slater funds for the stimulation and nurture of education in our Southern States. The Peabody fund is worth studying as another example of wise centralization used for increasing local and individual self-help.

In proportion to the progress of our country toward an urban condition of civilization and the political subordination of the rural phase, we ourselves achieve this desirable feature of wise centralization that really and truly "provides for the public welfare," in the sense that the deep-seeing mind of Jefferson used those words. We at the same time outgrow that morbid jealousy of centralization, not fearing any longer the usurpation of our liberties, now that we have the newspaper, universal free suffrage, and a government by public opinion.

The difference between a well-balanced civil government and socialism is as well marked as the difference between mere individualism and anarchy; for, while the civil state helps the locality or the individual only where



it can increase local or individual self-help, or where the interest of the social whole is subserved by it, socialism does the deed for the individual and destroys his power of self-help altogether. It assumes all directive power—all power of initiative. The civil government of the Anglo-Saxon finds the true balance between central and local powers where each re-enforces the other.

The school system at home in Great Britain is still complicated with questions of caste, and not so instructive to us or so easily understood as the school systems of the English colonies.

W. T. HARRIS.

WASHINGTON, *March 1, 1896.*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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EVERY school system has its own distinctive features. An ideal organization is scarcely possible in any case. The living forces which shape and mould the political institutions of a people also shape and mould its educational institutions, so that any system, to be successful, must adapt itself to social and local conditions. The school system described in the following pages is the evolution of the best thought of different Legislatures, aided and directed by the judgment of men who gave a lifetime to the task of adapting broad principles of organization and pedagogy to the wants and aspirations of the people for whom it was designed. Briefly summarized its chief characteristics are as follows :

1. It is an organized whole, beginning with the kindergarten and ending with the university.

2. It provides free education to all persons under twenty-one years of age.

3. It graduates the courses of study from the kindergarten to the university, so as to avoid waste of time on the part of the pupils and waste of teaching power on the part of the teachers.

4. It provides a trained teacher for every school, aided by public money.

5. It furnishes a uniform standard of examination for every teacher, according to his rank.

6. It protects children against the selfishness or neglect of parents and guardians, by making attendance at school compulsory.

7. It secures trustees against the incapacity of teachers by a rigorous system of examination and inspection.

8. It protects education from the caprice of public opinion by the appointment of inspectors during pleasure, and by the election of trustees for a lengthened term of service.

9. It secures economy and uniformity in text-books by placing their publication in the hands of a central provincial authority.

10. It permits the establishment of separate schools for Roman Catholics subject to the same standards of efficiency as the public schools.

To those who are concerned in the administration of schools it is always an advantage to know what methods are adopted in other countries for securing the co-operation of the public and promoting the efficiency of educational effort. In order that the reader might be able to study the school system of Ontario, as at present organized, full details have been given of its different departments. In preserving the continuity of the statement, repetition in some cases was unavoidable. To be concise, it was necessary to omit minor matters of detail. It is hoped, however, that the statement, as a whole, will enable the intelligent reader to understand reasonably well the various features of the school system which it has been the object of the author to unfold.

GEORGE W. ROSS.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, TORONTO, *January 2, 1896.*