

The History of Ontario Separate Schools: Sources and Problems

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Since education in Canada is a provincial responsibility it might be thought that the history of the Catholic school system within a province is too restrictive a topic for a national body like the Canadian Catholic Historical Association. But we are meeting this year in a city which has always had a large Catholic population and a vibrant (if sometimes nearly bankrupt) separate school system. Moreover, Windsor separate schools pioneered in the development of French-language schools. The history of education itself has drawn increasing attention from modern historians – it has always been central to the studies of ancient and medieval historians – for the education of a people seems to involve almost every direction of inquiry.¹ What is taught to the young is, of course, of great interest to the intellectual historian; for the social historian the structure of education clarifies much about concepts of class and the nature of civilization; school attendance figures inform the demographer of population shifts; the emphasis on religion and ethics in the schools reflects a society's system of values.

Ontario's major role in the life of Canada means that anything which seriously affected the cultural and political life of this province should be part of the consideration of the historian of Canada. I hope it will not be presumptuous of me to share with you some of my impressions from my

¹ For some recent examples of excellent historical studies, see Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools. Officialdom, Village Culture and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); George Huppert, *Public Schools in Renaissance France* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984); R. R. Palmer, *The Improvement of Humanity. Education and the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

experience in writing about the history of separate schools. What kinds of sources were used? Are other sources available? What further areas deserve exploration? What problems remain?

The title of any historical work in saying what the book is about implies also what it is not about. My studies were called *Catholic Education and Politics*,² which means they dealt with how the claims of separate school supporters affected political life and how political decisions impacted upon the schools. I did not examine the nature of Catholic education – what was taught in the schools, the qualifications of the teachers, or the success of the students. I did not include Catholic private schools. “Catholic education” in the title did not embrace Catholic higher education, because that was not a political issue. Most emphatically I did not write a history of separate schools, even though each school has its own often fascinating and sometimes controversial history.

In all ages and in all places the intimate relationship between religion and education has demanded an accommodation between church and state, and often there has been tension among ecclesiastics and statesmen. How sometimes political leaders have attempted to eliminate any role for the church in education, or have tried to use the church as a support for political goals, has been a familiar if dreary part of modern history. When a religious group consisted of a minority of the population, it had to seek protection from political authority to preserve its own schools; when a religion enjoyed a majority status, its leaders still had to persuade the rulers or public opinion of the necessity for religious training. A church which was identified with any particular national group had also to consider the defense of cultural as well as religious independence. Catholic schools in this part of the country became a fierce political issue because education developed in Upper Canada when throughout the civilized world public opinion had begun to accept the duty of the state to provide elementary education for every child. Taxation was now to substitute for the paying of fees, or for the voluntary efforts of religious bodies. Few had questioned the right of churches to establish schools, but that the taxpayer had to contribute to the support of religious schools was a principle that many rejected.

If most European nations allowed sectarian schools to expand as a part of the overall development of public education, the anti-establishment attitudes of American liberalism and the heritage of anti-Catholicism pro-

² Franklin A. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada* (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons [Canada] Ltd., 1955); *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons [Canada] Ltd., 1964); *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario: From the Hope Commission to the Promise of Completion (1945-1985)* (Toronto: Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario, 1986).

duced the religiously neutral public school. English-speaking Canadians looked two ways: to Britain, where despite the strength of anti-popery, Catholic schools, like those of other religions, had some public support, and to the United States, where a universal secularism was to be preferred to sectarianism. Britain provided a constitutional model for denominational school support, but Protestant attitudes in Canada were no more sympathetic to Catholic aims than was the case in the United States. Much of the emotional appeal of early Ontario liberalism came from anti-clericalism, or more precisely anti-Catholic anti-clericalism, while there was a long and warm relationship between the Loyal Orange Lodge and the Conservative party. The bitterness of anti-Catholic feeling in the nineteenth century should be seen in the context of the more pervasive attitude of toleration, fairness, and respect for law which distinguished Ontario Protestants in the same period. Many Protestants thought the confirmation in the 1867 British North America Act of the right of Catholics to establish separate schools was a mistake and that Catholics were wrongheaded to continue their operation, but very few Protestant leaders wanted to injure a right that had once been given. When the historian contrasts the bloody history of political fanaticism in twentieth-century Europe with the generosity and open-mindedness of non-Catholics in Ontario, he cannot help but marvel at the exceptional character of this province's devotion to law and reason.

Whatever the gratitude of Catholics, however, their leaders saw their main responsibility in the continuation and expansion of their schools, which suffered under enormous financial handicaps. The majority of the population may have accepted the right of the schools to exist, but it could not see their need and had no intention of extending support for them. Catholics, with limited political power, still had to use political means. Any minority can increase its political strength through its manipulation of the "swing vote" if majority opinion is divided between two major parties on other issues. But that option becomes meaningless when the supporters of both parties see their chief interest in the rejection of minority claims, or when the minority is incapable of managing a "swing vote". That Catholics were ever allowed separate schools in Ontario and that they were preserved in the 1867 Confederation agreement was not a testimony to the political skills of Catholic leaders, nor was it evidence of an admiration for Catholic schools on the part of the Protestant public, but rather it demonstrated the desire of French Canadian politicians to aid their coreligionists and the wish of the Quebec English-speaking and largely Protestant minority to maintain the integrity of its schools.

Both nineteenth-century religious and secular periodicals demonstrate the intensity of anti-Catholic feeling in Upper Canada. Demographic studies based on immigration, birth, and death statistics could help to clarify election

figures and perhaps throw more light on religious motivations among voters. So many factors were involved in elections, however, that the historian finds it difficult to avoid impressionistic evaluations. In addition to religious issues he must consider other matters that were important, such as the economy, the temperance movement, or the appeal of personality. More work can always be done in the newspapers, in provincial and national archives, but the exploration of local history – in county and town records, in family papers, in small periodicals – should contribute to our understanding of the province as a whole.³

For the nineteenth century more evidence could be obtained from ecclesiastical archives, which are now better organized than when I did my first two volumes and which are also more open in offering materials. Here I should like to pay tribute to your association for its role in distributing a book which gives particulars of each Canadian bishop and another work which describes the archival holdings of each diocese.⁴ These books are essential tools for anyone writing about Canadian Catholic history. Historians should look also into the archives of the non-Catholic churches and public school bodies. Much has already been published on the basis of Toronto public school records.

The Public Archives of Ontario has been engaged in a monumental cataloguing of education department materials. Already more is known about Ryerson's activities,⁵ but exciting research remains to be done on many aspects of educational history in the past century. A few years ago the Ontario Archives began to collect the records of individual school boards which had been abolished in the great mergers of twenty years ago. I do not know when the collections will be completed or when they will be

³ For some examples of recent work on Ontario's schools which use archival sources and demographic materials, see Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, eds., *Education and Social Change. Themes from Ontario's Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1975); articles on "Education and Social Change in English-Speaking Canada," *History of Education Quarterly*, XII (Fall 1972), pp. 251-454; Frank T. Denton and Peter J. George, "Socio-Economic Influence on School Attendance: A Study of a Canadian County in 1871," *History of Education Quarterly*, XIV (Summer 1974), pp. 223-232. See also Robert M. Stamp, *The Historical Background of Separate Schools in Ontario* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1985), and Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

⁴ *Canadian R.C. Bishops 1658-1979* (Ottawa: St. Paul University Centre in Religious History, 1980); *Abridged Guide to the Archives of Catholic Dioceses in Canada* (Ottawa: St. Paul University Centre in Religious History, 1981).

⁵ Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978).

catalogued. I was shown a box of material from an Ottawa Valley separate school board, and it strikes me that the class list should interest more than the antiquarian. The clarity, even beauty, of hand of the schoolmaster of a remote rural school suggests that we should not be too hasty in ascribing cultural backwardness to a people when it is ourselves who might be ignorant of the true state of affairs.

The minute examination of local schools should add to our information about the vexed question of what constituted a “common” education at the period of Confederation and to what extent Catholic schools taught “secondary school” subjects. When Confederation was considered, ecclesiastics made known their belief in the rights of Catholics to what would later be called “high schools”, but further archival work should show how great was the interest of churchmen and laymen in this matter. Did they think that the 1863 Scott Act already gave the right to Catholics to sponsor secondary education? Did they therefore seek only a clarification of principle? Was secondary education so remote for most children that the issue could rise only in the late nineteenth century? Was the struggle to maintain Catholic elementary schools so difficult that Catholic leaders regarded universal Catholic higher education as utopian?

Cannot more be learned about the moderate concessions which Ontario governments made to Catholic schools late in the nineteenth century? What kinds of political pressure, if any, did Catholics exercise? How important to the schools were these concessions? Did both Conservative and Liberal politicians hope to encourage Catholic support in quiet ways, or did the changes come from education department recommendations? Education department records certainly should show the role of the bureaucrat in educational legislation and regulations. Is it possible to find in nineteenth-century records details of school administration similar to those details about schools in the department of education records for the twentieth century? From the examination of central records and the records of local school boards, can we learn precisely what was taught in the schools? How advanced were mathematics? What was taught in courses in literature, science, and history? How well did the pupils spell? (I know of one energetic inspector who frequently emphasized drill in spelling. Unhappily, spelling blunders were not uncommon in his letters. Sometimes bishops did not know how to spell the word “separate” in “separate schools”.)

Further examination of the records of the provincial government, of local school boards, and of ecclesiastical archives should provide material for at least tentative generalizations about the Catholic populations in the cities, towns, villages, and in the rural areas. This information could be juxtaposed with Dominion census and immigration figures, as James S. Brown has done well in his 1985 University of Toronto Doctor of Education thesis on the

Metropolitan Separate School Board.⁶ In what ways would it be possible to compare the occupations and education levels of Irish, French, German, and other Catholics? And of Catholics with non-Catholics? Would it be possible to trace a development of the Catholic professional classes both in the nineteenth and in this century? Could information be obtained about those areas with large Catholic populations where the public schools were Catholic? These are very large questions, and possibly not all the answers are within the capacity of available sources. This kind of evidence, however, would help in seeing the background of debates about school legislation, or aid in appreciating the significance of legal decisions, or even assist in understanding intellectual motivations. Under the auspices of the Osgoode Society, legal historians are now collecting oral histories of judicial personnel. This material will be helpful in the study of the education of Catholic professional classes.

The terms of the current discussion about tax assistance for church schools were set in the nineteenth century, and therefore historians will continue to search through the records of that century for new material and they will reanalyse the considerable documentation that has already been published. The emotions which educational issues evoked in Ontario should be seen in the context of Canadian history, including the cultural history of Quebec and the Manitoba school question. These are areas where fine studies have been written and where much work is in progress. And it would be illuminating also to make comparisons with educational conflicts in Europe, although the undertaking of such a monumental task carries with it the temptations of superficial comparisons, inadequate factual bases, and faulty judgments.

Catholics in Ontario were subject to the same cultural influences as the non-Catholic majority. Catholics read those newspapers which attacked clergy and doctrine and which dismissed arguments in favour of separate schools. It is easy to summarize the position of daily newspapers and the counterclaims of Catholic journals, but it is extremely difficult to estimate the effects of these arguments and to make comparisons between one generation and another. Local school boards often knew a good deal about how many Catholic parents were separate school supporters, and school statistics can offer help to historians of religion who might be curious about what percentage of the Catholic population gave public allegiance to Catholic teaching. The efforts of a minority to maintain its school system in face of financial hardship and the sometimes scornful condescension of editorial writers provide an intriguing story of human behaviour, whatever might be

⁶ James S. Brown, "The Growth of the Metropolitan Separate School Board (Toronto) 1953-1978" (Doctor of Education thesis, University of Toronto, 1985).

an historian's own attitudes about the desirability of educational uniformity. How close can we come to penetrating the stubborn spirit of nineteenth-century Ontario Catholics?

Three problems, whose roots were in the nineteenth century, dominated in separate school controversies in the twentieth century: corporation taxes, French-language schools, and high schools. The industrialization of Ontario meant that an ever-increasing tax assessment came not from households but from industry. Since in most areas the Catholic minority was poorer than the Protestant majority, public schools were already in a favoured financial position. With the advent of heavy industry, the tax disparity between the two branches of the education system widened. The problem for Catholic educators became especially serious after World War II because of the huge number of Catholic immigrants. Low teacher salaries and a large number in the teaching religious orders kept schools open – with increasing assistance from provincial grants – but it was difficult for schools to proceed with capital expenditures. In a great many places Catholic parents could see how inferior were their school buildings in contrast to those of the neighbouring public schools. Catholic briefs to the government offered tables which showed tax resources, but an economic historian should be able to present a complete analysis depicting the tax resources of both public and separate schools by area and by decade. The stirring nature of the religious aspect of the tax question should not hide differences in tax resources among town, suburb, county, north, and south. After all, separate schools were carried on the coattails of the 1964 “foundation” plan, which had been designed to equalize educational opportunities for all children – not just those who attended separate schools. The passage of time means that more manuscript evidence is available now about such items as the Tiny Township case, the Ford Motor Company case, and above all about the work of the Catholic Taxpayers' Association. When I wrote the second volume I did not have access to the papers of Archbishop Neil McNeil nor those of Archbishop J. C. McGuigan, and I had only partial access to the papers of other ecclesiastics. Much more may now be told, and hopefully more refined judgments may be made.

That spirit of educational justice for all children which motivated supporters of the “foundation” plan applied also to French-language schools, the rights of which were so triumphantly established in the sixties. The historiography on Quebec history quite rightly is enormous; every undergraduate knows a great deal about French Canadian nationalism in Quebec. But I think the English-speaking public should be made more aware of the difficult struggle of Ontario French Canadians to develop their schools. The first Catholic schools in this province were French, and French Canadian leaders worked intimately with English-speaking Catholic

educators to lobby on behalf of separate schools. Even a brief perusal of education department records will show how desperate was the financial position of many a rural French Canadian school board. French Canadians showed an extraordinary determination to keep their schools alive, to defend their language rights, and to expand educational opportunities for their children. There are no such things as historical “laws”; there are only people gifted with free wills who somehow work out their own destinies. Few testimonies of human freedom are more moving than the story of the French Canadians of Ontario, who refused to be submerged in an English-speaking environment.

The insistence on cultural survival on the part of so many in the French Canadian community carried with it economic handicaps, when employers demanded proficiency in English and when higher and professional education was mostly in the English language, as was vocational instruction. The efforts early in this century of Bishop M. F. Fallon and the Conservative government to improve English-language training at the expense of “bilingualism” are well known. Greater access to ecclesiastical archives, however, and the enormously rich archival collections of the French Canadian Education Association, as well as the availability of more newspapers on microfilm, should make possible the presentation of new information and allow for greater balance in interpretation, in an area where too often passion has excluded a proper analysis of motivation.

The issue of high schools is still current, as the full implications are being realized of Premier William Davis’ promise of full funding and the subsequent legislation. I hope that the statesmen involved in granting extension and educators who are implementing the changes will preserve their letters and take the time to write their recollections. Almost none of this kind of documentation was made available to me. In fact, it was understood that my account was to end with the failure of the extension campaign in 1971. The subsequent Davis promise changed the thrust of my conclusion. Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter recently wrote me that a whole book could be written on the Davis decision alone. And it is apparent that another book could be written on subsequent events. Some historian should at least record the full story of the efforts of Catholic leaders in the seventies and eighties of this century to obtain funding, to build schools during a period of budgetary limitations, and to preserve the integrity of the Catholic system.

It is tempting to advise others on what histories they could write, and it is only trite to say that what will be written will depend upon the uncovering of sources and on the willingness of educational bodies to sponsor publication, or on the interest of publishing houses in issuing books on educational history. I should like to conclude my remarks with observations on the sources for my third volume. This has been my only venture into

contemporary history, with its attendant problems of vanished letters, unrecorded but pertinent telephone calls, fading memories, hazards from copyright, or even libel laws.

Much more evidence – perhaps thirty times as much – was available for the past forty years than for my two first volumes, and I had the advantage of knowing many of the chief figures in the story. While the abundance of evidence seemed for a time to make the subject unmanageable, I am aware of how many documents may have escaped my attention. Personal acquaintance with those involved in controversies can easily lead to bias or at least to problems in making judgments. The three Ontario Catholics whom I had learned to admire most were Archbishop O’Sullivan, Bishop Ryan, and Arthur Kelly. Mr. Kelly had remarked to me that the “furious forties” of my first volume were nothing like the “furious forties” of the twentieth century, when O’Sullivan and Ryan challenged the stand of the Catholics on the Hope Commission. When to my very great surprise many years later I was engaged in writing an account of the Hope Commission, I realized what Mr. Kelly meant. Emotionally and intellectually I identified myself with both parties to the dispute, but I tried to let the documents speak for themselves. What the documents could not convey was the goodness, highmindedness, and kindness which the two churchmen radiated. This is but another demonstration that any work of history provides only an approximation of the reality which it sets out to convey.

What rules should the historian follow in working with contemporary documents? From the legal point of view this is a hazy area, where legislation must be combined with court decisions. Prudence and common sense should not diminish honesty. Some documents are restricted – as, for example, the John P. Robarts Papers in the Ontario Archives – and they must await the attention of future historians. Other records are restricted but may be seen with the approval of the appropriate branch of the government, as, for example, the records of the department of education. The receiving of permission to examine letters does not mean an unrestricted right to publish. The historian might get into trouble if he published a foolish letter from Mrs. John Doe to the premier without first obtaining Mrs. Doe’s approval. She had, after all, sent her letter to the government, not to the historian, and she might not like being made the subject of ridicule. The privilege to use an archive does not give the historian the right to injure feelings or to hurt reputations. Not only has the historian no right to write about a family or a personal problem he may have encountered, he has no right to chatter about them. Surely correspondence about a teacher’s efficiency or about marriage problems should remain buried.

Chance plays a very large role in what private papers the historian is allowed to use. I was most fortunate in the generosity of persons such as

Albert E. Klein and Father Carl Matthews in being allowed to use large amounts of their correspondence. Many others were also most helpful, such as Judge John Bennett and Judge Francis Carter. It took some years for me to persuade the late Arthur Kelly to let me see his papers relating to the Hope Commission. Mr. Kelly did not want any reference in the book to the tensions in the Commission between the Catholic representatives and some of the bishops. But when finally I persuaded him of the essential character of that material – and besides I had a lot of letters from other sources – he turned over his letters without restriction, and his outstanding memory filled in gaps, saved me from blunders, and confirmed the validity of other documents. But there are dozens of persons involved in Catholic school issues whose papers have vanished, or which at least were never placed at my disposal. A former university classmate, who later played a large role in the controversies of the sixties, informed me when I asked him about his papers that in the previous year he had burned two large bags full of materials. Probably this is what happened in many instances. On the other hand, Bishop Ryan made a point of collecting everything relating to the high school question, including vast amounts of correspondence, newspaper reports, and minutes of bishops' meetings, for which otherwise there would have been no record.

The records of educational organizations are much like private papers. Small organizations do not have archives, but rather they have office records, for example, the minutes of meetings and the duplicates of letters, which may sometimes be made available to an historian. Through the offices of Chris Asseff, former executive director of the Ontario Separate School Trustees Association, I was allowed to see all of that group's correspondence. This necessitated the removal from the basement of the OSSTA offices many enormous cartons of letters, neither indexed nor filed. The papers of the French Canadian Education Association have all been neatly filed in hundreds of boxes at the Centre for Research in French Canadian Culture at the University of Ottawa. These are brought to convenient desks upon request, and the attendants efficiently xerox all requested items. Besides correspondence, these records contain addresses, newspaper accounts, and biographies of leading figures. I exploited the documents thoroughly for the postwar period, but they would also add to our knowledge about the early, heroic days of the association. The records of the English Catholic Education Association were not so old nor quite so rich, but they were still very voluminous. Yet they were essentially office files, with large portions of them being housed in cartons in a basement, the retrieval of which demonstrated once more that historical research can be more physical than mental.

The papers of Premier George Drew and Premier Leslie Frost may be consulted in the Public Archives of Ontario. Those archives also contain the

education department records until the end of the sixties. Special permission was needed to read the records of the fifties and sixties. The records included the correspondence of important officials, and moreover each school board has a file, or a number of files, for each year. Since restricted documents cannot be xeroxed and must be read in a room where a typewriter cannot be used, the searching through thousands and thousands of folders was tedious and time-consuming. There were also large boxes of material relating to the provincial commissions of inquiry. The historian soon learns that any letter sent to the government not only receives a reply, but the correspondence is preserved. Kept are not only letters about the repair of a boiler but also notes from disgruntled parents, with memoranda attached from numerous officials as well as the final replies.

Ecclesiastical records in diocesan archives fall somewhere in between the office records of educational organizations and the manuscripts in public archives. Some of the older dioceses have extensive archives, as, for example, the archdioceses of Toronto, Ottawa, and Kingston and the diocese of Hamilton. One must first get the permission of the bishop for any research in an ecclesiastical archive. The degree of indexing varies, depending upon the professionalism of the archivist and the amount of time at his disposal for a task the scope of which increases day by day. As a whole the indexing – with the exception of Ottawa – ranges from haphazard to none at all. If possible it is best to read all the correspondence for each month. When, as is sometimes the case, the historian is confined to files marked “education” or “separate schools”, he may miss letters which relate to education, for the subject crops up everywhere. There is often a separate file for each year for each religious order in a diocese, and the members of many of these orders, of course, taught in separate schools.

A diocesan archive is a collection of chancery office letters, and many of the smaller dioceses have no archives, but rather chancery offices. I found the chancellors to be helpful in finding space for my work, in pulling out files, and in making arrangements for photocopying. Chancellery files do not contain all the relevant material, since bishops sometimes have their personal files. Hamilton diocesan archives contained a good deal of material about separate schools, but the personal papers which Bishop Ryan loaned me were much more extensive and pertinent. Bishop J. R. Windle of Pembroke was gracious in letting me see his chancellery records, but he could not let me see the files of retired Bishop W. J. Smith because Bishop Smith was much too ill to be troubled. There are letters of Bishop G. E. Carter in London diocesan archives, but most of the Carter correspondence for his London period was shipped to Toronto, where I was allowed to see those papers which related to education. Bishop R. H. Dignan of Sault Ste. Marie burned

all his papers when he retired. But fortunately some of his letters may be found in the archives of the recipients.

Circumstances made it difficult for me to conduct as much research as desirable in oral history. Donald MacDonald of the New Democratic Party has pointed out quite correctly that more information could have been obtained from politicians. Absence of interviews, the loss of valuable documentation, the obvious role of conversations and the telephone in discussing plans, should not lead to scepticism about the results of research. Enough duplication exists to demonstrate that there are few, if any, serious gaps in our knowledge. It might be that an important circular from Father Vincent Priester is missing from his office file, but it may be found in the papers of Cardinal McGuigan and several other bishops. I do not know whether or not Senator John Connolly preserved his papers, but many of his letters and addresses are available in the Priester papers. Of course, officials discussed things with one another in offices, but the substance of these discussions usually appeared later in minutes and letters. One may assume the use of the telephone, but prominent people – bishops, politicians, or educators – were busy people, who did not care to interrupt one another. They preferred to make known their views by letters, which could be carefully considered. The burden for the historian of contemporary events is not so much in the absence of material, but in its abundance and in having to sort out what is trivial and repetitious from what is a key to apprehension.

I cannot help but be grateful that so much material was available about separate schools, but it is possible that family or even official papers may turn up which would be useful for later historians. How would it have been possible to have written anything worthwhile about the postwar period in Catholic education without the happy accident of Bishop Ryan's passion for preserving documents? Perhaps others like Bishop Ryan have boxes of letters which remain in basements? In a truly terrifying act of barbarism, an official of the department of education, against the protests of the provincial archivist, destroyed all the records of the discussions in the Hope Commission committees. As the archivist noted, in these committees were heated arguments about separate schools. Those debates cannot be reconstructed.

Such experiences should be instructive in the case of current documentation. Are those persons now involved in the request for Catholic high schools keeping proper records of their demands and the replies they receive? Are those engaged in pondering the purpose of Catholic schools preserving their ideas? Are candidates for boards of education recording their campaigns? Are trustees tracking their handling of school issues? What have inspectors and teachers to say about their experiences? What records are legislators keeping of school discussions within their parties? Carelessness

about records in our possession can place us in a position comparable to those Norse invaders who destroyed monastic libraries. The passing on of a culture to posterity is not an antiquarian eccentricity nor an act of foolish vanity but a responsibility of each generation to its descendants.

It is fitting to add that your association is doing a great deal to fulfil this responsibility. Since the appearance of my first two volumes, a new generation of energetic and talented Canadian historians has been engaged in research in themes which relate to the history of Catholics and of education. Your annual reports demonstrate the kind of work which has been done. The recently announced O'Driscoll and Reynolds *The Irish in Canada* illustrates the results of new research.⁷ We all look forward to the scholarly conference in June 1990 on the sesquicentennial of the Archdiocese of Toronto. The *Bulletin* of your association is invaluable for its bibliographical information and for providing up-to-date information about Canadian diocesan archives. As a former officer of the association I know some of the difficulties of working without compensation, sometimes without thanks, and always without an adequate budget. But you have made a great deal of progress, and I should like to commend you and your officers, especially Michael Power, president, Mark McGowan, editor of the *Bulletin*, and Rev. Edward J. R. Jackman, O.P., secretary-general, who has earned the gratitude of us all for the extraordinary zeal he has devoted to the cause of the transmission of Canadian Catholic history.

May I in conclusion obtrude with a personal observation about the writing of my books. Anyone involved in Ontario Catholic education is familiar with the work of the secretaries of the English Catholic Education Association of Ontario – Right Rev. Vincent Priester and Rev. Patrick Fogarty. I have tried to present some of their efforts in my third volume. But I should like to bring to the attention of this historical society their intelligent grasp of the importance of separate schools as an historical phenomenon. It was they most of all who supported the publication of these histories. Long after he had retired from the education association, Msgr. Priester showed his interest in the final volume; he replied at once in detail to any inquiry. It would be tedious to list all the help that Fogarty gave me, but when I report that not only did he lend me his car but took the time to instruct me in its use when he was late for a meeting, you will appreciate his generosity. Both Priester and Fogarty knew that polemics had no place in history. They wanted not an apologia for separate schools but an objective history. They did what they could to provide me with all sources over which they had any control or influence and encouraged my own explorations. In no way did

⁷ Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds, eds., *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988).

either influence my judgments. That both died when my last volume was being written and therefore were not able to see a draft of my manuscript was heartbreaking. It is some consolation, however, to know that any observation they would have made would have been by way of a helpful commentary on fact, not a censorship. Neither was a trained historian, but professional historians can only admire the honesty of these gifted amateurs who contributed both to Canadian history and by their encouragement to the writing of that history.