The Ontario Bilingual Schools Issue: Sources of Conflict

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IN OCTOBER, 1910, the bilingual schools of Ontario became the centre of bitter public criticism and debate. Newspapers previously indifferent to the existence of such schools showed a sudden interest in their operation and the Ontario government quickly appointed a commissioner to investigate and report on conditions in the bilingual schools. The serious controversy which followed was not entirely unexpected. Although attracting little public notice, the interaction of conflicting interests had been building up pressure for several years. The explosive situation thus created illustrates how prejudice and extremism can foment strife if fundamental principles clash and prevent co-operation.

The use of French in the publicly supported schools of Ontario was potentially a very divisive issue. French Canadians living in Ontario believed that it was essential for their children to use and study French at school in order to gain a thorough knowledge and appreciation of the language. French-Canadian parents repeatedly declared that they wanted their children to learn English because they realized that a knowledge of English was necessary for life in an English-speaking province. But an important rider was always attached to these declarations; they did not want English to be taught at the expense of French. French was the mother tongue, the symbol of French-Canadian identity and pride, and it took precedence over English, the language of business and the dominant language of the country. On the other hand, not all English-speaking residents of Ontario were willing to accept the presence of French in Ontario schools. Many saw Canada as primarily and properly a Britannic nation and feared that French in the schools of Ontario would undermine the Anglo-Saxon character of the province.

For some time after Confederation, French was accepted in Ontario

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schools as completely convertible with English. In 1885, a regulation of the Ontario Department of Education for the first time made the study of English compulsory in all public schools and instructions were sent to inspectors and teachers giving detailed directions for a programme in English.[1] The new policy can be considered as part of a general movement towards increased central control and higher standards of education but the Liberal administration of Sir Oliver Mowat was undoubtedly also keeping a wary eye on the political barometer. The emotions and prejudices inflamed by the Riel controversy and the Jesuit Estates Act strengthened English-Canadian extremists in their determination to defend British and Protestant institutions. Dalton McCarthy took up a crusade to secure the abolition of the French language in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, and Ontario Conservatives demanded "English only" in the schools of the province. As a result of the agitation the Mowat government appointed a commission to investigate the teaching of English, and, after receiving the Commission's report, the Department of Education issued special regulations governing language in Ontario schools. Under these 1890 regulations definite provision was made for French as a subject of study in school sections where the French language prevailed, and French might be used as the language of instruction and communication in Ontario schools if the pupils were unable to understand English.[2] However, in 1885 the study of English had been made compulsory. Now, in addition, the 1890 regulations required that English be the language of instruction except where impracticable. The use of French as the language of instruction and communication was meant to be only a temporary expedient, and it was intended that English should become the language of the school as soon as possible.[3] Until 1912 the Ontario bilingual or English-French schools, as they were more officially called, were schools in which French as well as English might be used according to the terms of these regulations.[4] The 1890 regulations

[1]Province of Ontario, *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario, 1950* (hereafter *Hope Commission Report*) (Toronto, 1950), pp. 398–9. See also Franklin A. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario* (Toronto, 1964), *passim.*

[2]*Hope Commission Report*, p. 401. [3]*Ibid.*, p. 402.

[4]In the regulations no direct reference was made to the teaching of English in separate schools while the public school course of study was specifically mentioned. Although regulations of the Education Department applied equally to separate schools and to public schools, the wording of these regulations could easily give rise to a belief that separate schools were exempted. No direct mention was made of the separate schools because in 1890 when the regulations were formed there were very few separate schools in which French was used. By contrast, in 1912 there were 223 separate schools as compared to 122 public schools in which French was used. Since both French Canadians and English Canadians have frequently equated bilingual schools with separate schools, it must be emphasized that bilingual schools were not necessarily separate schools and separate schools were by no means all bilingual.

temporarily quelled the demand for "English only" in Ontario schools, but the language problem was not solved.

The tension created by friction between the two major ethnic groups of Canada continued to mount in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The question of separate schools in Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan produced successive bouts of bitter racial and religious animosity. The Boer War raised the issue of imperialism and loyalty to Britain in an even more contentious form. As clash followed clash, the moderate forces lost some of their confidence and their patience, and extremists became more prominent. In 1903 the Ligue Nationaliste was organized in Montreal by a small group of young intellectuals, including Armand Lavergne, Olivar Asselin, and Omer Héroux. Henri Bourassa, the unchallenged leader of this group, soon became the most prominent and commanding spokesman of the Nationalist movement. The Nationalists advocated an Anglo-French nation extending throughout Canada with provision for Catholic education and a general bilingualism in all provinces. In their efforts to further these aims the Nationalists maintained a clear-cut inflexible policy and made no allowance for those whose views differed from their own. It was an ambitious and active movement which, although small at first, appealed to French-Canadian youth. On the other hand, the unquestionably aggressive quality of the Nationalist programme strengthened the determination of many English-speaking Canadians to resist French encroachments.[5]

At this time of heightened sensitivity, both English-speaking and French-speaking residents of Ontario became acutely conscious of the new strength of Ontario's French-Canadian population. The influx of French Canadians into the eastern counties, which had aroused apprehension in the 1880's, had never ceased. As the French moved in, many English-speaking farmers, left in a minority and attracted by new opportunities in the West, moved out; their vacated farms were bought by French Canadians, and so, over the years, a gradual displacement process had converted much of Ontario's eastern corner into a French-speaking district.[6] Then, as lumbering activities and mineral discoveries opened up New Ontario, a considerable French-Canadian population moved across the Ottawa River and followed the railway lines along Ontario's northern fringe.[7] In addition, an isolated French-speaking group still dwelt in that section of Ontario first settled by the French—the southwestern counties of Essex and Kent.

[5]M. P. O'Connell, "The Ideas of Henri Bourassa," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, XIX (1953), 361–76.

[6]O. D. Skelton, "The Language Issue in Canada," *Queen's Quarterly*, XXIV, 448. C. B. Sissons, *Bi-lingual Schools in Canada* (Toronto, 1917), pp. 85–6.

[7]Sissons, *Bi-lingual Schools*, p. 83.

The official census figures reveal that the French-speaking population of Ontario was not only growing but growing more rapidly than the English-speaking population. While the total population of Ontario rose from 1,926,922 to 2,523,274 between 1881 and 1911, the number speaking French increased from 102,743 in 1881 to 158,671 in 1901 and reached 202,442 in 1911. Moreover, it is likely that the French-speaking population in 1911 exceeded the official census figure. In 1909 the ecclesiastical census of the province reported 247,000 French Canadians, and the round figure 250,000 was often cited in newspapers and speeches. When interpreted, these statistics meant that the French-speaking portion of Ontario's population had increased from approximately 5 per cent of the total in the 1880's to nearly 10 per cent in 1910.[8]

For French Canadians in Ontario, knowledge of their increasing strength provided fresh incentive for organization. Early efforts to unite the French of Ontario met with little success. Around 1900 a fleeting attempt was made but the conclusion reached was that "le temps n'est pas venu."[9] In 1906 the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Ottawa formulated a detailed plan of federation but it was never implemented.[10] Increasing numbers gave encouragement but the need for concerted action had to be more fully demonstrated. An issue broad enough and important enough to appeal to all French Canadians in Ontario would be an invaluable aid. Such an issue was the education of the French-speaking children.

In 1903 the arrangement agreed upon in 1886 which divided the Ottawa Separate School Board into two sections, the French section to control the management and finance of the French schools and the English section to control the management and finance of the English schools, was terminated and the two sections amalgamated to form one administrative and financial unit. But the French Catholics and the Irish Catholics did not work together peacefully for long. In 1904 the French majority of the Board decided to build an elaborate school to be conducted by the Christian Brothers principally in the French language. Their plan was thwarted by an Irish Catholic named Grattan who obtained a court injunction to prevent the Board hiring the Christian Brothers as teachers. According to a clause in the Separate School Act of 1863, "persons qualified by law as Teachers, either in Upper or Lower Canada, shall be considered qualified Teachers for

[8]*Canadian Annual Review* (*C.A.R.*), 1911, p. 471. Margaret Prang, "Clerics, Politicians, and the Bilingual Schools Issue in Ontario, 1910–1917," *C.H.R.*, XLI (1960), 288.

[9]*Congrès d'Education des Canadiens-Français d'Ontario 1910, Rapport Officiel* (Hawkesbury, 1909), p. 42 (hereafter *Congrès d'Education 1910*).

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

the purposes of this Act." Thus, members of religious orders, exempt from examination in Quebec, might also teach as qualified teachers in the state-supported separate schools of Ontario. However, the Act had since been amended and it was now asserted that this clause applied only to persons who had been so qualified before Confederation. While litigation was proceeding, the English-speaking ratepayers, who although in a minority paid the greater share of the school taxes, demanded that the two separate sections of the Board be re-established as "the only solution to the present acute condition." Their demand was not granted but the Irish Catholics of Ottawa did win a significant victory in the court case. In November, 1906, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council ruled that members of Quebec religious orders who joined after 1867 were not qualified to teach in Ontario without passing Ontario examinations.[11]

It was shortly after this court ruling that efforts to unite all French Canadians in Ontario began to attract more interest. Although the French-Canadian Congress of Education did not meet until January, 1910, the official report stresses that the Congress was no sudden occurrence, but rather the culmination of a long series of events and the result of very careful preparation. In March, 1907, T. Rochon, inspector of bilingual schools in eastern Ontario, organized a pedagogical convention which passed resolutions aimed at reforming the bilingual system and also appointed an impressive list of officers for the following year. The 1910 report credits this earlier convention with having awakened the slumbering spirit of Franco-Ontarians. If they could now be stimulated to action, a leader was readily available in Judge A. Constantineau, county judge of Prescott and Russell, who had been advocating a national congress for some time.[12]

However, the realization that unsatisfactory conditions exist does not necessarily result in any attempt at improvement. Since apathy is such a powerful deterrent to action, a sustained campaign to secure support was undertaken through the medium of the press. On September 11, 1908, in the little village of Hawkesbury in the county of Prescott, J. H. Laurin published the first number of a new weekly newspaper, *Le Moniteur*. Although modest in appearance and emanating from an obscure location, this newspaper undertook an important mission. *Le Moniteur* was dispatched to every French-Canadian home in the province to urge in forceful style: "Soyez unis, mettez de côté les intérêts des partis et en avant pour le triomphe de notre nationalité."

[11]C. B. Sissons, *Church and State in Canadian Education* (Toronto, 1959), pp. 82–4. Sissons, *Bi-lingual Schools*, pp. 71–2. *C.A.R.*, 1914, p. 424.
[12]*Congrès d'Education 1910*, p. 46.

Each week it returned with the rallying cry, "L'union fait la force," so put aside lesser interests and join together to fight for French-Canadian rights in Ontario.[13]

The newspaper campaign was well in progress when Aurélien Bélanger, inspector of bilingual schools for Ottawa and surrounding district, called a meeting of school trustees and others interested in education. For those who had been advocating a French-Canadian congress, this small meeting, held in Ottawa on December 28, 1908, marked the transition from hope to actual preparation. When Inspector Bélanger asked the gathering what could be done to aid the separate schools, Curé Beausoleil replied, "Nous allons préparer un Congrès de tous les Canadiens-Français d'Ontario. Qu'en pensez-vous, mes amis?" After discussing various obstacles which might prevent success, those present decided to go ahead. Curé Beausoleil and Judge Constantineau were directed to invite the principal French Canadians of the area to a meeting to consider the proposal.

About a hundred leading French Canadians from the Ottawa district met on January 24, 1909, endorsed the project of a congress, and nominated a committee to communicate with the other groups of French Canadians in the province in order to secure their co-operation. These groups were canvassed by means of a circular letter which, among other questions, asked: "Quelles sont les conditions locales et vos besoins au point de vue de l'éducation?" From across the province came the quick and unanimous reply: "Venez à notre secours! . . . Sauvez nos écoles françaises!" At a meeting on May 4, 1909, the committee reported that province-wide support for a congress was assured, and therefore the detailed work of organization began. No aspect of preparation was ignored as seven committees—education, general interests, publicity, statistics, finance, organization, and reception—set to work. Soon all French Canadians in Ontario would be united by one organization and would be able to make the most effective use of their combined strength.[14]

It was primarily to defend French schools that the French-Canadian Congress was organized according to the official report of the Congress.[15] But what danger was threatening the French, or, more accurately, the English-French schools? Why did they need protection? Apart from an oblique reference to the loss of qualification by the Quebec religious orders, the report offers no explanation.[16] Certainly,

[13]*Ibid.*, pp. 47–9.

[14]*Ibid.*, pp. 52–92. This summary has been drawn solely from the 1910 Congress Report which provides a fairly full but rather disjointed account of the preparations. The report gives long lists of those who participated in the preparations but does not specifically indicate the principal organizers.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 60.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 52.

it was only after the Privy Council ruled against the religious orders that attempts to unite the French in Ontario received any real encouragement. But the court decision in itself would hardly seem a sufficient threat to evoke such a strong reaction. The sole effect of the ruling was to compel all religious teachers to obtain Ontario qualifications; in no way did it touch upon the use of French in the schools.[17] Why then the desperate appeal, "Save our French schools"?

The dispute in Ottawa which resulted in the Privy Council decision was only one skirmish in a long conflict between Irish and French Catholics. For Irish Catholics, the influx of French-speaking Catholics into Ontario had special significance. The school system of Ontario is established on the basis of religion, not of race. Consequently, Irish Catholics often found themselves forced into an uncomfortably close association with their French co-religionists. French-speaking children attended their schools; French-speaking trustees took their place on the separate school boards; even French-speaking teachers were hired to instruct the children. The friction inherent in the school situation was aggravated by a perpetual church feud which involved all levels of the Catholic clergy. Neither Irish nor French neglected any opportunity to strengthen their own position as they vied for control of the Catholic church in Canada. One prominent Irish Catholic of the time testified to the intensity of the conflict:

> Now, no one wants to do the French Canadians an injustice. The British Crown has given them what is actually an empire in the Province of Quebec, but no right or claim have they on this account, or on any other, to all the Provinces of the Dominion. They have been, with difficulty, kept out of Church control completely, in Ontario and the Maritime Provinces; with difficulty driven out of that control in British Columbia. They are still in control of the Church organization in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan.[18]

In this struggle, French Catholics were steadily building up strength against Irish Catholics in eastern Ontario.

The clash was most severe in the city of Ottawa where the opposing forces met head on. Here, in the basilica whose stained-glass windows bore Irish names, services were now being conducted in the French language.[19] Here, too, the University of Ottawa provided a major battleground. The Oblate Order of France, which controlled the university for some time after it received its charter in 1866, made English the official language of the institution. Then, largely through

[17]There do not seem to be any statistics which show haw many teachers already employed were affected but the Ontario government made arrangements to enable these religious teachers to become qualified. University of Toronto Library, "Correspondence . . . concerning the Bi-lingual School Issue," Education Department Memorandum, 1907.

[18]Ontario, Department of Public Records and Archives, Whitney Papers, Father J. F. Coffey to Whitney, Oct. 27, 1910.

[19]*Toronto Daily Star*, Oct. 15, 1910.

the influence of Archbishop Duhamel of Ottawa, the Quebec Oblate Order with headquarters in Montreal gained control of the university and began converting it into a distinctively French institution. One important step in this process was the banishment to the United States of Father Michael Francis Fallon who had been vigorously opposing any increase in the use of French.[20] Fifteen years later, Bishop Fallon wrote: "My removal in 1898 as vice-rector of Ottawa university and my subsequent removal in 1901 as pastor of St. Joseph's church was the result of a deliberate conspiracy hatched in Montreal and Ottawa."[21] The French won the encounter at the University of Ottawa but strong personal motives for retaliation had been given to a man who was later to acquire much power as bishop of the diocese of London. In the meantime, the centre of attention shifted to the Separate School Board of Ottawa. The dispute which arose over teachers' qualifications was not the first incident of trouble between Irish and French and neither side expected that it would be the last. In a continuing conflict with aroused Irish Catholics, French Canadians of Ontario might well fear for the future of their schools.

At the same time, an important change occurred in provincial politics. After thirty-two years of power in Ontario, the Liberals suffered a crushing defeat in the 1905 elections. Conservatives led by the Hon. James Pliny Whitney swept the province, winning in 69 of the 98 constituencies.[22] The party traditionally supported by Orangemen now governed Ontario. The party which in 1890 demanded "English only" in all Ontario schools now controlled the school policy of the province. Could French Canadians in Ontario be blamed for feeling apprehensive? Three years later the Conservatives won an even more impressive victory. On June 8, 1908, Ontario voters elected 89 Conservatives, 16 Liberals, and 1 Independent to give the Conservatives the largest majority in the history of the province.[23] During its first term of office the Whitney government does not seem to have interfered in any way with the use of French in the schools. But shortly after the 1908 elections an important wing of the party began to show signs of discontent.

The Orange Order, dedicated to the preservation of Protestant supremacy and the imperial connection, saw in French-Canadian society the very antithesis of its most cherished values. In Quebec, ecclesiastical despotism had triumphed over the British ideal of individual liberty for all.[24] French-speaking Roman Catholics were

[20]*Toronto Daily Star*, Sept. 22, 1910; Whitney Papers, Father J. F. Coffey to Whitney, Oct. 27, 1910.

[21]*Ottawa Citizen*, March 20, 1916.

[22]Province of Ontario, *Directory and Guide to Services of the Ontario Government* (Toronto, 1964), p. 263.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 264.

[24]*The Sentinel and Orange and Protestant Advocate*, Dec. 8, 1910.

vassals of the Church to an even greater extent than English-speaking Roman Catholics. According to the *Sentinel*: "English-speaking Roman Catholics are not so amenable to priestly influence as are the French. Association with Protestants has developed in them a larger (but still all too small) measure of independent action."[25] In addition, French Canadians were not linked by ties of language and tradition to the empire and their loyalty was questionable at best. Orangemen believed that the English language was one of the strongest bonds of imperial unity, and they viewed the extension of the French language into Ontario as a threat not only to British institutions but to the empire itself. In the opinion of the *Sentinel*, the dual language system was a vicious principle:

> It is admirable to deal generously with the conquered race. But is it not fatal to grant them concessions which threaten the stability of our institutions? . . . There is another side to this question. . . . It is the ulterior purpose that is hidden as much as possible from public view. What is intended by the movement is to strike at the integrity of the Empire. Talk as we may about the loyalty of the French to Britain, the fact is patent to every observant man that Imperialism as it is understood in the English-speaking Provinces finds no favour among the French Nationalists. Independence is their goal.[26]

In the Orange Order's hopes and plans for Canada there was no room for French Canadians. Regrettably, the Canadian constitution had granted certain rights to French Canadians, particularly in Quebec, and these probably could not be rescinded. Under no circumstances, though, should these rights be extended. If the French Canadian came to Ontario he should accept Anglo-Saxon ideals: "He is welcome as long as he is willing to become one of us and co-operate in the upbuilding of an Anglo-Saxon community. If he has different ideals he had better go elsewhere. We cannot deny our past and do violence to our future in order to gratify his national ambitions."[27] However, French Canadians failed to recognize the superior worth of Anglo-Saxon traditions and determined to retain their own identity and customs. Confronted with the stubborn persistence of French Canadians, Orangemen felt both exasperated and alarmed. In the words of the *Sentinel*, "It is this refusal to assimilate that makes the French-Canadian so difficult to get along with."[28]

For the Orange Order, the increasing number of French Canadians in Ontario signalled danger ahead. Ontario, the stronghold of imperial loyalty and English Protestantism, was being taken over by the French. Orangemen had been reading *The Tragedy of Quebec* by Robert Sellar, editor of the Huntingdon *Gleaner* and a good Presbyterian.[29]

[25] *Ibid.*, Jan. 12, 1911.
[26] *Ibid.*, April 7, 1910.
[27] *Ibid.*, Nov. 25, 1909.
[28] *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, 1910.
[29] *Ibid.*, Dec. 9, 1909.

First published in 1907, the book describes with great poignancy and bitterness the expulsion of the English-speaking Protestant farmers from the Eastern Townships of Quebec. The parish system was the principal force driving out the Protestants but it received strong support from its close relation, the Catholic schools:

> The text-books are Catholic, the whole atmosphere of the school is Catholic. The farmer cannot in conscience send his little ones to it, and so the French-Canadian, who has been wanting his farm, gets it, and a week after he is in possession a priest comes to see the new acquisition of his church, for it has joint proprietorship with the habitant in its acres. For the first time a priest drives up the lane lined by maples which the grandfather of the dispossessed Protestant planted, and levies tithes on the yield of fields his great-grand parents redeemed from the wilderness, and which four generations of Protestants have ploughed.[30]

Watching the influx of French Canadians from across the Ottawa and the establishment of more and more schools in which Roman Catholic catechism was taught and the French language spoken, Orangemen saw the tragic history of the Eastern Townships being re-enacted in the eastern counties of Ontario. Was even Ontario to be dominated by those twin evils, the Catholic hierarchy and the French language? The Orange Order answered with an emphatic: "No, not so long as it is within our power to prevent it!"

Early in 1909, D. Racine, the French-speaking member for Russell in the Ontario legislature, introduced a bill designed to give more funds to the separate schools, and the Orange Order's interest in the eastern counties increased.[31] The Joint Legislation Committee of the Order reported to the Grand Orange Lodges of Ontario East and West that school conditions in the eastern counties were far from satisfactory. Religious exercises were being conducted contrary to law and French was being used in the schools to the exclusion of English. After receiving this information, the Orangemen decided to send a special commissioner into the eastern counties to get statutory declarations concerning the conditions in the schools. They wanted to present an unassailable case against the schools and were willing to bear any expense involved.[32]

In the meantime, the Department of Education had not been idle. Dr. R. A. Pyne, the Minister of Education, had been making many changes in the school system in an attempt to improve standards generally. In the case of the English-French schools, this concern for educational progress was doubtless augmented by the fact that the government could not afford to ignore the obvious sentiments of the

[30]Robert Sellar, *The Tragedy of Quebec* (Huntingdon, P.Q., 1907), p. 200.
[31]*Ottawa Citizen*, March 12, 1909. [32]*Sentinel*, Dec. 29, 1910.

Orange Order. On October 30, 1908, Dr. F. W. Merchant, Chief Inspector of Public and Separate Schools, was instructed to ascertain the general conditions and necessities of the English-French Schools in the Ottawa Valley.[33] In his confidential report submitted on January 9, 1909, Dr. Merchant informed the Department that the schools were predominantly French:

> The atmosphere of the schools is undoubtedly French. The language of the teacher in conversing with the pupils or in giving general directions is French. The children use French in their ordinary conversations in the school and on the playground. The language of instruction in Forms I and II is almost exclusively French. In all but a few schools French is also used in teaching the subjects of Form III. Where a Fourth Form exists, the subjects of the entrance examination are usually taught in English but in three schools I found French used mainly in this grade.[34]

Although English was being taught in all schools, there was great diversity in the methods and the results. In general Dr. Merchant found that the pupils were not proficient in either English or French. However, he attributed most of the weaknesses in the English-French schools not to the system but to lack of training and experience in the teaching staffs.[35] He emphasized the need for training schools and recommended that the Ottawa bilingual model school be continued and placed on a more permanent basis and that a bilingual model school be established in the Nipissing district, preferably at Sturgeon Falls.[36]

Thus, at the beginning of 1909, both the Orange Order and the Department of Education were showing a growing concern for the state of the English-French schools of the province. This interest was not widely publicized; in fact, it was kept very quiet. Reports of Orange Lodge meetings in the spring of 1909 emphasize the separate school issue but do not mention the language question.[37] Until late 1909 the Orange *Sentinel* avoids any striking reference to the use of French in the schools. Dr. Merchant's report was filed as confidential and not released by the Department of Education. However, investigations of school conditions could never be completely concealed from those being investigated, especially since many of the schools concerned were located in the inspectorates of two bilingual inspectors, A. Bélanger and V. H. Gaboury. These two gentlemen, whom Dr. Merchant thanked for their assistance, participated actively in the preparations for the French-Canadian Congress.[38] Congress organizers would

[33] F. W. Merchant, *Report on English-French Schools in the Ottawa Valley* (Toronto, 1909), p. 1.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–5.
[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
[37] *C.A.R.*, 1909, p. 233.
[38] *Congrès d'Education 1910*, pp. 53, 57, 58, 66, 68.

probably have had no difficulty in obtaining a complete and official account of school investigations.

The continuing enmity between Irish and French Catholics, the activities of the Orange Order, and the investigations of the Department of Education can be used to construct a good case in defence of the French claim that action was needed to save their schools in Ontario. Yet fear doubtless magnified the existing danger. The agitation of the Orange Order was relatively subdued and the report of Dr. Merchant was, on the whole, sympathetic towards the French. In 1909 the Department followed Dr. Merchant's advice and established a new bilingual training school at Sturgeon Falls in an effort to provide better qualified teachers for the English-French schools of Northern Ontario.[39] But the French Canadians of Ontario, aware of their vulnerable position, were not inclined to trust the authorities. Dr. Merchant records the apprehension of a people whose existence was constantly threatened by a gradual assimilation process: "While there is practically no opposition to English, there is a very strong feeling, closely connected with racial, religious, and national sentiment that the French language must be maintained. Hesitancy in supporting the study of English is frequently the result of the fear that it will lead eventually to the suppression of French."[40]

Fear that French would be suppressed in the schools of Ontario was undoubtedly an impelling force in the organization of the French-Canadian Congress and the formation of the French-Canadian Education Association. But it was definitely not the only force. The French Canadians of Ontario were not simply responding to attack or to fear of attack; conscious of their increasing strength, they were taking the initiative. Their intention was not to *defend* their rights but to *extend* their rights, not only to protect existing rights but also to secure additional ones. A long editorial in *Le Moniteur* on September 10, 1909, outlined the purpose of the French-Canadian Congress: "The principal aim of this Congress is to obtain schools where the French language and religious instruction shall occupy a place of honour. For the execution of this design it is necessary for us to have primary bilingual schools, secondary bilingual schools, [normal] bilingual schools and as a crown to the whole a bilingual university."[41]

In addition, the Congress strove to secure public office for French Canadians in Ontario:

Considérant . . . que le chiffre de la population canadienne-française dans cette

[39]"Correspondence . . . concerning the Bi-lingual School Issue," Education Department Memorandum, 1915.

[40]Merchant's *Report on English-French Schools*, p. 8.

[41]Quoted in the *Sentinel*, Dec. 16, 1909.

province a *plus que doublé* dans les deux dernières décades, et que, malgré *cette grande augmentation*, ils n'ont encore qu'un seul sénateur et deux juges de comté, comme il y a quinze ou vingt ans . . . le Congrès d'Education des Canadiens-Français d'Ontario demande respectueusement et instamment la nomination d'un sénateur, d'un juge de la cour supérieure et de juges de la cour de comté, choisis parmi les Canadiens-Français de cette province.[42]

Was this the sort of programme which would be proposed by a group fearful that they were going to be deprived of their present rights? No, this was an ambitious nationalist programme, the product of racial consciousness and pride.[43] The enthusiasm shown for the movement to unite all the French Canadians of Ontario, whatever their occupation or political affiliation might be, was mainly the result of a very thorough and energetic campaign built up around the schools question.

Education was a vital issue in itself, for, as *Le Moniteur* pointed out, "L'avenir de notre race dans Ontario dépend de l'éducation que recevront les petits Canadiens-Français."[44] However, the educational issue might also be used for other purposes. Robert Rumilly in his *Histoire de la Province de Québec* suggests that there was another reason, a reason not publicly announced, for holding a Congress at this time: "Il s'agissait de défendre les droits scolaires. Il s'agissait bien aussi de faire une démonstration de nombre, d'union, de résolution, à l'heure où le clergé irlandais et le clergé canadien-français se contestaient la succession de Mgr. Duhamel."[45] The death of Archbishop Duhamel in 1909 left vacant the important archdiocese of Ottawa. The French clergy were most anxious to secure a worthy French successor to Archbishop Duhamel and a show of strength might be very effective against the claims of the Irish opposition. Members of the clergy took an active part in organizing the Congress; their subscriptions helped to defray the cost of the Congress, and many curés accompanied the delegates to Ottawa.[46] Of course, Catholic education is closely allied to the Catholic church, but it is not likely that the interest shown by the French clergy was entirely educational.

So, in response to a variety of forces, including educational problems, ethnic pride, religious strife, and directed by a few energetic leaders, the French Canadians of Ontario united. Over twelve hundred delegates from all parts of the province, all chosen by local nominating conventions, assembled in Ottawa on January 18, 1910, for the first

[42] *Congrès d'Education 1910*, pp. 264–6.

[43] A possible connection, either direct or indirect, between the movement to unite the French Canadians in Ontario and the Quebec Nationalist movement might be worth exploration.

[44] *Congrès d'Education 1910*, p. 47.

[45] Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, XIV, 123–4.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

French-Canadian Congress of Education.[47] For three days they discussed their difficulties, their needs, and their hopes; they heard reports of various committees; they listened to speeches on education and general social interests. But the delegates took action as well. They founded a permanent organization called L'Association Canadienne-Française d'Education d'Ontario, with an executive committee composed of five officers, fifty members, and an impressive list of honorary members. Every person of French origin living in Ontario was made a member of the Association which had as its announced aim, "la juste revendication de tous les droits des Canadiens-Français d'Ontario et l'infatigable surveillance de leurs intèrêts.[48] The statutes of the Association also provided for biennial conventions at which delegates from across the province would elect a new executive and decide on questions of general interest.[49]

In addition, the Congress unanimously adopted a series of resolutions to be presented to the Ontario government. The long preamble and fourteen resolutions essentially demanded that the French language be given a more official and prominent position in the elementary and secondary schools and in the teacher training institutions of the province. In connection with elementary education, the 1200 representatives of the French Canadians of Ontario urged that all schools where the majority of the pupils were French be declared English-French and in such schools French be authorized as a language of instruction and communication and a series of French readers and textbooks be approved; that instruction be given in French reading, spelling, grammar, composition, and literature in all schools where 25 per cent of the pupils were French; that the supervision of all such schools be given to bilingual inspectors; that French subjects be placed on the entrance examination and those writing the French subjects be allowed a lower passing grade in the English subjects. No mention was made of any desire to learn English; instead, the mistreatment of the Franco-Ontarians was emphasized: "There is in Ontario not a trace of secondary bilingual education with the result that the mass of French-Canadian children are forced to limit their studies to primary education, given under the most unfavourable conditions, and consequently popular instruction in the case of French-Canadians is maintained at an excessively low level."[50] Aggressive rather than conciliatory in tone, the document was not likely to win the sympathetic support of the government or of the majority of Ontario citizens.

[47]The official report lists the names of 1,245 delegates.
[48]*Congrès d'Education 1910*, p. 267. [49]*Ibid.*, p. 269.
[50]Whitney Papers, Copy of Resolutions, Senator N. A. Belcourt to Whitney, Feb. 18, 1910.

The major decisions and discussions of the Congress took place behind closed doors. However, the display features of the Congress—the public reception at the Russell Theatre and the closing banquet at the Russell House—were just as important as the working sessions, for a public demonstration of unity and strength was one of the primary purposes of the Congress. At the Russell Theatre on the evening of January 19, a distinguished array of speakers addressed an audience of two thousand. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada; Rodolphe Lemieux and Charles Murphy, federal ministers; Frank Cochrane and Adam Beck, provincial ministers and official representatives of Sir James Whitney, headed the list of prominent political figures present, while the ecclesiastical dignitaries were led by Mgr. Routhier, administrator of the Diocese of Ottawa.[51] Although some speeches were made in French and some in English and although details varied, the point of each speech was virtually the same—praise for the French language and the French Canadians of Ontario. For this evening of eulogy, the keynote was struck by Sir Wilfrid Laurier: "La langue anglaise, c'est la langue des affaires, la langue française, c'est la langue de cœur. . . . Le Congrès doit poursuivre l'œuvre si bien commencée, travailler à *maintenir* et *améliorer* les écoles bilingues où les Canadiens-Français pourront apprendre et conserver, comme le plus précieux des trésors, leur belle langue française."[52]

The delegates would long remember this evening and it was intended that they should. The reception committee had worked hard to prepare "une fête dont le souvenir serait d'un puissant secours pour raviver dans les cœurs l'amour du nom canadien."[53] Now, representatives from all parts of the province, fortified by greater pride in their nationality and higher hopes for the success of their united efforts, would return home to transmit the new spirit to their neighbours. Such was the design of the Congress. The difficulty was that the Congress succeeded in rousing to action more than the French Canadians of Ontario.

The holding of a congress provoked an enemy who was already restless, and that enemy was not slow to retaliate. The Orange Order viewed the French-Canadian Congress as a challenge to Ontario, a challenge posed by a French-speaking invading army with big church and little school.[54] In the past, the French, and more particularly the French-speaking Catholic hierarchy, had moved cautiously and quietly in Ontario, but now they had come brazenly out into the open and declared their aspirations.[55] Orangemen welcomed this open challenge and responded to it by demanding that all bilingual schools in Ontario

[51] *Congrès d'Education 1910*, p. 215.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[54] *Sentinel*, Jan. 6, 1910.
[55] *Ibid.*, Oct. 14, Dec. 9, 1909.

be abolished.[56] In December, 1909, the official organ of the Order, the *Sentinel*, began an educational campaign to acquaint the public with French aims in Ontario, and for some time thereafter devoted its attention almost exclusively to this cause:

> Let there be no misconception of this French-Canadian Educational Congress on the part of the Protestants of Canada. Its avowed aim is the Gallicizing of the public and separate schools in Eastern Ontario. At present the teaching of the French language at all in these schools is simply a concession given by the ever-indulgent, broad-minded Protestant majority of Ontario. But the French-Canadians in Ontario, now numbering over 200,000, demand that this concession be glorified into a legal right.[57]

The *Sentinel* strenuously opposed the resolutions passed by the French-Canadian Congress:

> It is part of the great ambition of the French that French be equal with English. Should that demand ever be conceded . . . the battle waged for a century will have been lost, and the barrier that Ontario has for so long opposed to the oncoming tide of French settlement will have been swept away. All that would mean to the destiny of Canada cannot readily be imagined. It would almost inevitably mean French domination and papal supremacy.[58]

However, the *Sentinel* was not too worried, for it was confident that the English-speaking citizens of Ontario, once aware of the danger, would soon rally to prevent French encroachment. Since the English were an overwhelming majority, any wise Ontario government would unhesitatingly turn down the impossible demands of the French Congress:

> A blunt statement might serve to check the racial ambitions of our French fellow-citizens, and it would win the applause of English-speaking Catholics as well as of Protestants. There is little sense in alienating the French electorate by refusals so vague that Anglo-Saxon support is not rallied. Any set of politicians that cares to rely on the appreciation of the English-speaking people of Ontario, need be in no fear of the threats of any other race.[59]

Extreme and biased though many of the statements of the *Sentinel* were, there was nevertheless much truth in its contention that no Ontario government would grant the demands of the French Canadians if those demands were solidly opposed by the English-speaking population of Ontario. Therefore, it can be argued that, by holding a congress, the French Canadians seriously harmed their own cause. Before 1910 the Orange Order had shown considerable interest in the schools in the French-speaking areas of eastern Ontario, but it was the French-Canadian Congress which enraged the Orange Order and set off its vigorous public campaign aaginst the French invasion of

[56] *Ibid.*, Nov. 25, 1910.
[57] *Ibid.*, Jan. 6, 1910.
[58] *Ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1910.
[59] *Ibid.*

Ontario.[60] By the late winter of 1910, thrust and counterthrust had become the order of the day. On February 9, 1910, a delegation of sixty prominent Orangemen representing the Grand Orange Lodges of Ontario East and West laid before Premier Whitney a series of 33 affidavits affirming that school laws concerning the use of French and the teaching of catechism were ignored and English-speaking school supporters unjustly treated in the eastern counties.[61] On February 18, 1910, a deputation from the French-Canadian Education Association, introduced by A. Aubin, M.L.A., presented their demands to the Premier and urged immediate action.[62] Whitney noncommittally promised both groups that he would give the subject thorough consideration. However, the Orangemen held the stronger position for, while they asked that existing school regulations be severely enforced, they did not at the moment ask for any change in the regulations. In addition, the Orangemen were more likely to secure support from the other English-speaking residents of Ontario than were the French Canadians.

Indeed, it was not long until another Ontario group stationed itself at the side of the Orange Order in firm opposition to French-Canadian demands. The Irish Catholics of Ontario certainly had little in common with the Orangemen, but they had their own good reasons for opposing French Catholics. Apart from the continuous church struggle, English-speaking Catholics feared that the French agitation would harm the separate school cause. During 1909 separate school supporters, led by the English-speaking Catholic bishops of Ontario, had been pressing the Whitney government to give them a larger share of the elementary school grants.[63] The hopes of the bishops and their followers were almost fulfilled early in 1910 when the government drafted plans for a re-apportionment of the school funds. But the plans never advanced beyond the drafting stage. On March 9, 1910, Whitney wrote to Archbishop McNeil of Toronto:

> I regret very much that considerations beyond its control have prevented the Cabinet from giving proper and full consideration to the propositions laid before it by you some time ago. We fully expected to be in a position to do so before now, but the memorandum submitted to us on behalf of a Congress of French-Canadians held at Ottawa, has so complicated matters that we find it quite out of the question to deal with the subjects thoroughly during the stress of the sessions.[64]

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[60]On Oct. 14, 1909, the *Sentinel* in an article entitled "A Challenge to Ontario," made its first attack on both the French-Canadian Congress and the bilingual schools.

[61]Toronto, *Mail and Empire*, Feb. 10, 1910. *Sentinel*, July 21, 1910.

[62]*Globe*, Feb. 19, 1910.

[63]"Correspondence . . . concerning the Bi-lingual School Issue," Folder 2.

[64]P.A.C., Landry Collection, Memorandum of Bishop Fallon for the Bishops of Ontario, Jan. 24, 1917, p. 9.

Shortly after they learned that all their efforts had been nullified by the actions of their French co-religionists, Irish Catholics gained a determined and energetic leader who had his own personal reasons for bitterness as well. On April 25, 1910, Michael Francis Fallon, the former Father Fallon of Ottawa University, was consecrated Bishop of London. The time for retaliation had come.

While in Sarnia on May 22, Bishop Fallon arranged a meeting with W. J. Hanna, member for West Lambton and Provincial Secretary in Whitney's cabinet. Most of the interview was devoted to the question of bilingual schools, a question which the Bishop personally regarded as dominating all other questions so far as the welfare of the people of his diocese was concerned. Mgr. Fallon used the occasion to serve notice that the Ontario government could count on his strenuous opposition if it ever succumbed to French-Canadian agitation. In the meantime he had determined, so far as it lay in his power, to wipe out every vestige of bilingual teaching in the public schools of his diocese; the interests of the children, some of whom had never learned to speak English, demanded that he take this course. Hanna was so impressed by the Bishop's earnestness that the following day he sent a complete written account of the interview to Dr. Pyne, with a copy to Premier Whitney. In Hanna's opinion: "His [Bishop Fallon's] whole attitude was not antagonistic by any means but there is no question about it he is a wonderfully strong character and is very much in earnest on this question and I could not but be impressed with the idea that on what may happen in this connection will turn his whole support or opposition throughout this Diocese."[65]

Other English-speaking Bishops of Ontario, and in particular Archbishop Gauthier of Kingston and Bishop Scollard of Sault Ste. Marie, viewed the creation of the French-Canadian Education Association as suspiciously as did Bishop Fallon.[66] In their interview on May 22, Bishop Fallon told Hanna that the French agitators aimed to control both church and state and that unless stamped out they would be as dominant in one as in the other. He then added that the majority of the bishops of the province had recently got together and put themselves on record and that shortly a deputation would call upon the government.[67] The deputation never appeared[68] and Bishop Fallon afterwards denied that the meeting had been held.[69] However, the English-speaking bishops did petition the government later in the summer. Meeting at Kingston on August 15, 1910, the bishops of the

[65]Whitney Papers, W. J. Hanna to R. A. Pyne, May 23, 1910.
[66]Memorandum of Bishop Fallon for the Bishops of Ontario, pp. 9–10.
[67]Whitney Papers, W. J. Hanna to R. A. Pyne, May 23, 1910.
[68]*Sentinel*, June 23, 1910. [69]*Globe*, Oct. 17, 1910.

ecclesiastical provinces of Kingston and Toronto unanimously resolved:

> That we are alarmed for the future of our Catholic educational system in Ontario because of the agitation that culminated in the French-Canadian Congress in Ottawa in January 1910; and that the Right Reverend the Bishop of London be delegated from this meeting to interview Sir James Whitney, Prime Minister of Ontario, and represent to him our entire opposition to the educational "Demands" of said Congress.[70]

Bishop Fallon later wrote that his interview with Premier Whitney on August 16 was "most satisfactory."[71]

With the beginning of a new school year in September, 1910, Bishop Fallon exercised his authority over the schools of his diocese. The Sisters of Saint Joseph at Belle River and at Walkerville were instructed to cease teaching French in their schools. At Windsor, the Sisters of the Holy Name, a French-Canadian order with its mother house in Quebec, were replaced by the Ursuline Sisters of Chatham, an Irish order.[72] The removal of the Sisters of the Holy Name also prevented the re-opening of a class to train bilingual teachers which the government had recently established at the convent. A Windsor separate school trustee later explained the change to Whitney:

> His Lordship then forbade the sisters of the Holy Name to teach in our schools. As the Ecclesiastical head in the diocese he had to be obeyed and with regret the good sisters informed us of their inability to take charge of our schools in the face of the edict of His Lordship. We found ourselves powerless to resist the well laid plans of His Lordship and we had to take the Ursulines or close our schools. The teaching of French was then dropped in those schools and the class opened in the convent by the department was closed.[73]

While schools were opening without the use of the French language in Essex, the Twentieth Eucharistic Congress, the first ever held in North America, met at Montreal. Huge crowds and elaborate decorations greeted the high dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church who assembled for a week of religious solemnity and splendour.[74] No church friction could penetrate such an impressive gathering—or so it seemed to the public at first. Then, on the evening of September 10, the scholarly Archbishop Bourne of Westminster startled an immense audience at Notre Dame Church by declaring that the Roman Catholic Church in Canada should identify itself with the English language

[70]Memorandum of Bishop Fallon for the Bishops of Ontario, p. 10.

[71]"Correspondence . . . concerning the Bi-lingual School Issue," Fallon to Pyne, Jan. 2, 1912.

[72]Landry Collection, Ecclesiastical Manuscript Pamphlet, "La Situation Religieuse des Catholiques-Français" (1912), Memoire No. 1, pp. 32–4; Resolution of French-Canadian Education Association, Ottawa *Free Press*, Oct. 14, 1910.

[73]Whitney Papers, Gaspard Pacaud to Whitney, Nov. 15, 1913.

[74]*C.A.R.*, 1910, p. 351.

if it wished to advance. While most of the assembly listened with dismay or anger, Henri Bourassa hastily considered a reply. When his turn came, Bourassa discarded his prepared text and gave instead an impassioned defence of the French language. Bourassa's impromptu eloquence won for him the acclaim of his people. French Canadians in Quebec and across the country had found a strong champion to whom they could look for leadership and encouragement.[75]

Archbishop Bourne's speech and Bourassa's reply did much to inflame the language issue in Ontario. At the same time the newspaper announcement that Archbishop Gauthier of Kingston had been appointed head of the Ottawa diocese further incensed the French Canadians, for Archbishop Gauthier though French in name was Irish in mentality.[76] Therefore, almost immediately after the close of the Eucharistic Congress, the French-Canadian press set off in heated pursuit of Bishop Fallon, accusing him of having forbidden the use of French in the schools of his diocese. The publicity was probably much more extensive than the Bishop had anticipated. He responded by issuing a press statement on September 22 in which he emphatically denied that he had forbidden the use of French in the schools:

> I have never been, by word or deed, by intent or desire, unfriendly to the interests of the French Canadian people and I never shall be unfriendly to them at any time or place no matter what the provocation. . . .
>
> I have never issued, or caused to be issued, directly or indirectly, verbally, by writing, or in any other way, any order or mandate or even expression of opinion, concerning the teaching of French or any other language in the Separate Schools or in any other schools in the diocese of London, or any other place.
>
> I have not, and I never have had, any objection to the teaching of French or any other language in accordance with the laws of the province of Ontario and the regulations of the provincial department of Education.[77]

Could Bishop Fallon's declaration be believed? The French-Canadian press thought not and published a document to substantiate their charges. This important document was a copy of the private letter which W. J. Hanna had written to his colleague, Dr. Pyne, the previous May giving a full account of his interview with Bishop Fallon. First printed in the *Revue Franco-Américaine* of Quebec on October 1, 1910, the letter was reprinted in *Le Devoir* on October 7, and from that point made the rounds of most Quebec and Ontario papers. Thousands of copies of a letter which was never intended for publication rolled off the presses. Soon all Ontario and Quebec knew that Bishop Fallon "had resolved, so far as it is in his power, to cause to

[75]Mason Wade, *The French Canadians* (Toronto, 1955), pp. 580–1.

[76]Landry Collection, Ecclesiastical Manuscript Pamphlet, "Rapport et Documents relatifs aux difficultés religieuses actuelles au Canada" (1917), p. 23.

[77]*Globe*, Sept. 23, 1910.

disappear every trace of bilingual teaching in the public schools of his diocese."[78]

The publication of this private and confidential letter lifted from the files of the Ontario government made sensational front page news. Interest was immediately attracted not only by the provocative nature of the letter but also by the intrigue which surrounded its disclosure. Shortly after the story hit the Toronto papers, Mr. Maisonville, private secretary to the Hon. Dr. Réaume, French-Canadian representative on Whitney's cabinet, accepted responsibility for the abduction of the letter and "resigned."[79] But the damage had already been done. Bishop Fallon announced that he was engaged in drawing up a reply which would act "considerably like a bomb,"[80] and on October 17 the promised bomb was featured in the newspapers. To an expectant province, Bishop Fallon declared that:

> Not only was public education in certain sections of my diocese in a deplorable condition, but if any attention were to be given to the preposterous demands of the Ottawa French-Canadian congress it threatened to become more deplorable still. . . . Essex stands lowest educationally amongst the nine counties that constitute the diocese of London. Everything flourishes there except education. The land is heavy with rich harvests, choice fruits and a generation of uneducated children.

The whole statement was a ringing indictment of "an alleged bilingual school system which teaches neither English nor French, encourages incompetency, gives a prize to hypocrisy and breeds ignorance."[81]

Although Bishop Fallon might claim that he was opposed to the bilingual school system because it was grossly inefficient, the bilingual schools controversy which achieved such prominence in October, 1910, cannot be attributed solely or even primarily to a concern for high educational standards. The *type* rather than the *standard* of education was the centre of interest. The efforts of the French-Canadian Education Association were directed towards preserving and extending the rights of French Canadians in Ontario. For better or for worse the desire was that more French be legally taught in the schools, and any consideration of educational standards was purely incidental to the main purpose. The Orange Order made no pretence of concealing its motives. Bilingual schools should be abolished because they threatened the integrity of Anglo-Saxon institutions and would enable French Canadians to convert Ontario into another Quebec. Separate schools might have to be tolerated but not French schools! Bishop Fallon, as representing the Irish Catholics, expressed concern for the low standard of education in the bilingual schools but the remedy he prescribed was

[78] *Globe*, Oct. 13, 1910.
[79] *Star*, Oct. 15, 1910.
[80] *Star*, Oct. 13, 1910.
[81] *Globe*, Oct. 17, 1910.

not to improve the schools but to destroy them. The interests of the French-Canadian children, as interpreted by the Bishop, coincided rather well with the interests of Irish Catholics. It was these intense racial and religious forces which made the bilingual schools of Ontario an explosive public issue in 1910, and these same forces were to retain control, shaping the conflict that followed. In the mounting tension of the war years, the schism thus created made the Ontario bilingual schools issue an important national concern.