

RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION *

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EDUCATION as a subject of almost continuous controversy is sharply contrasted by other professions which appear to serve the people with only the occasional internal difficulty becoming a public issue. It would seem that there is some fundamental weakness which causes or aggravates the faults in education. Much study has been given to many parts of the system, but it is necessary to examine too the source of power, its nature, its capacity and its dependability. In education the source of power is government. Indeed it is the only profession which in almost every way depends upon the state. It is appropriate, therefore, to examine the educational system from the standpoint of principles and practice of government.

The thesis of this paper is that most of the basic problems of education have their origin in executive and administrative weaknesses, and that education, one of the most vital public enterprises, has defied many of the principles upon which the government itself is based. It is not argued that state control is undesirable, for it is most essential. Rather it is suggested that educational administration has lagged far behind constitutional developments in other fields of democratic government. It is further suggested that the remedy for many of the weaknesses of education is the granting of responsible government to the schools.

The troubles of the present system should never obscure its many achievements. But sometimes in our enthusiasm for what education can do for society we neglect to allow for what it can't do. The limitations of control in particular have been neglected. There are many studies on the teachers and their methods, the schools and their management, and the curriculum and its planning, but adequate study has not been made of the cabinet and the school boards as the executive authority, and the department of education and its agencies as the administrative authority. Indeed one of the weaknesses of the teaching profession is that everyone appears to know the limitations of teachers far better than those of the

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policy makers and directors. Despite their advantages and achievements, the executive and administrative branches of the educational system are seriously weakened by the fact that there is not sufficient provision made for their limitations. In other governmental activities the constitution provides many safeguards for such limitations—what the Americans call checks and balances—in parliament, the cabinet, the civil service and so on, and in many ways the system of responsible government is itself a compensation for limitations.

Four groups are intimately concerned with education: (1) the members of the provincial legislatures and municipal councils, (2) school trustees, (3) civil servants, and (4) the staffs of the schools. There is a clear-cut division between the first three groups, which deal exclusively with executive direction and administration and don't teach, and the last group which does the real business for which the system is intended but which has virtually no effective power. One of the significant features of this arrangement is unique in government, the fact that the executive and administrative structure is so large and so clearly separated from the functional.

THE EXECUTIVE:

The place of the politicians and school trustees—the executive in education—is well defined by Sir Ernest Barker. "It is not the business of law", he writes, "or of any legal authority, to control the inner life of the process of education. It is only the business of law, and of any legal authority (even if it be called an education authority), to secure the external conditions of a process which, in itself, is necessarily independent of law and legal authority".¹ The wisdom of this principle has been proved wherever it has been applied, and also, in negative fashion, in the many parts of the educational system where it is now ignored.

The efforts of politicians and trustees are most important. They are the representatives of the people who require educational services and pay for them, and as such the ultimate executive power should be vested in them. They are also "laymen" with general experience and they contribute the suggestions, encouragement, criticism, and direction of persons who see the system as a whole and its effect or lack of effect on the community. In this respect their position is in harmony with the

(1) Sir Ernest Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, London, Oxford, 1952, p. 121.

constitution which, in so many ways, is designed to combine the efforts of what Walter Bagehot called "the minds which attend to the means" and "the minds which attend to the end."

The most serious limitation of the politicians and trustees is the fact that their functions encourage, indeed require, them to attend to the means in education as well as the end. People who would hesitate to interfere with the medical work of a hospital or the technique of crown prosecution in court must concern themselves with even the most trivial details of school teaching. This propensity to meddle bedevils education and is one of the main factors in the frequent resignations of teachers and principals who are constantly subjected to pressure and have no power whatever to withstand it. Admittedly there is often a very thin line between the exercise of proper constitutional authority and executive meddling, but the point is that there are not sufficient safeguards to prevent the first, which is almost invariably good, from being frustrated by the second, which is always bad. "The objections which are urged with reason against State education", said John Stuart Mill in the *Essay on Liberty*, "do not apply to the enforcement of education by the State, but to the State's taking upon itself to direct that education; which is a totally different thing."¹

This concern with means is not necessarily the fault of the executive; rather it is the result of a lack of regular contact between the executive and the schools. Barker's and Bagehot's observations presuppose the regular meeting of minds so that each group has ample opportunity of exchanging advice and information with the other and this exchange is provided in most processes of government. In education, however, politicians and trustees really know very little about the day to day problems of teaching and the school personnel are usually unaware of the circumstances of policy making. Again the fault is not that the politicians and trustees have too much power—they have, and should have, all of it—but that they must exercise too much of it themselves. This situation prevents the executive officers from performing their functions adequately and saddles them with responsibility for details which should never be theirs to bear. Actually they can't bear it and the system frequently must suffer because no one else can.

The second limitation of the executive is its lack of defence

(1) Mill, *On Liberty*; Everyman's Edition, 1944, p. 161; see also pp. 164-5.

against purely political pressure. Politicians and trustees occupy temporary and part-time positions which they owe to election and appointment and it is therefore extremely difficult for them to resist powerful pressure. They must be responsible to the people they represent, but such responsibility is dangerous to them and to their organization if it is carried to illogical or undesirable extremes. This danger is present in all forms of public enterprise, but there are many safeguards to prevent or at least to discourage it. In education it is always present because there is too great a concentration of unprotected power in one place and because there is not enough regular consultation and discussion before the power is exercised. Education is particularly vulnerable to purely political pressure, for it is a cultural process close to the attitudes, ambitions, prejudices and rivalries of the people and these vary widely and change continuously. Accordingly, political pressure on education may be fickle and inconsistent and dangerous if uncontrolled. Again, a cultural process is more easily frustrated by such pressure than is a technical one for it thrives best in an atmosphere of initiative and freedom. To give scope to the legitimate influence of public opinion and public needs and at the same time to control undesirable pressure education requires the effective delegation of protected power and the free exchange of advice and opinion.

Political interference also works in a negative direction—to confine, prevent, frustrate and discourage. Some politicians are suspicious of education or of anything that smacks of culture. Moreover, they know that educational problems can be powerful political dynamite and they will often do almost anything to keep them in the background. And experience has taught them that public works, social services and other "practical" enterprises are much better vote-getters than educational reforms. From the purely political standpoint a dormant educational system is much less troublesome than an energetic one, and, consequently, action is often more likely to invite political pressure than the lack of it. Paradoxically enough, therefore, too much political control results ultimately in a lack of response to public needs. "Naturally", says the Learned-Sills report on education in the Maritime Provinces "the effect is to be felt in negative rather than positive forms. Education must 'keep its place'; an aggressive policy of public taxation for education is thought to be out of the question for a body that desires reelection; the department of education is managed with whatever proposals a cabinet will consider harmless."¹

(1) Learned and Sills, *Education in the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, New York Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1922, pp. 6 and 7.

In short, the government and the school trustees do not have the time, the experience, the information, or the inclination with which to deal with the details of education. Despite this fact they control all the power over both general policy and detailed management. The school principals and teachers who should handle the latter can't, and the system frequently breaks down because of inertia, red tape, and frustration. The minds which look after the ends retain too much power and can't use it effectively; the minds which look after the means have no power and can't get any. Consequently, neither the means nor the ends are adequately served.

As a partial compensation for these weaknesses much executive power is left in the hands of the minister of education, an executive official who is in a position to bring to the educational system all the advantage of wise cabinet direction and to connect the system with the other activities of government. The importance of ministers of education is obvious for their powers include so much direction over the cultural processes of the nation. Every educational institution, whether public or private, is subject in many ways to the influence of a minister. And other enterprises, such as music, art, and drama, are often dependent on the good will of a minister who may be in a position to provide needed encouragement, facilities, or funds. So much therefore depends on his personal qualities and on his relations with the whole cabinet which must approve his actions, with the schools which must follow his direction, and with other bodies which might require his cooperation.

A man of ability and common sense can give great leadership to such a system, but, unfortunately, a lesser minister is in a position to do irreparable damage with nobody to check him effectively. The retention of so much power by one man is highly questionable either as a constitutional principle or as an administrative practice in a cultural field, for the same executive limitations mentioned above apply with even greater force to his office. The delegation of minister's powers which is so important in other governmental activities is not adequately arranged in education with the result that his functions are not being performed with justice either to himself or to those who serve under him. An additional difficulty is the fact that the portfolio of education is regarded as a junior portfolio and is therefore almost invariably assigned to a new and untried member of the cabinet.⁽¹⁾ It should not be forgotten that the

(1) In 1953 all education ministers were holding their first portfolio except in Manitoba where the Minister had been in another office for two years

intricacies of cabinet government are just as important in education as the more obvious characteristics of the schools, for their consequences, bad as well as good, are felt immediately throughout the entire system.

Nevertheless, the mere presence of a minister, even if he is able and senior, does not guarantee effective leadership. The organization is too big for him and he is forced to retain too much power in his own hands. Moreover, like his colleagues, he is part of the executive as a whole and he must give a portion of his time to other matters of government beside education. Bagehot's famous rule for ministers is perhaps more applicable to education than to most other portfolios: "It is not the business of a Cabinet Minister to work his department. His business is to see that it is properly worked. If he does much, he is probably doing harm."⁽¹⁾

The effectiveness of the executive in education, therefore, is restricted by limitations resulting from the lack of properly delegated power. This situation is undesirable, not only because of the many resulting weaknesses in the system, but also because the power is ultimately over the minds of the younger generation, a vast responsibility that should never be exercised in a democracy by a few even though they be officers of state. "A democratic society", says one educationist, "if it leaves both the provision and the control of education to the State is just as much in danger as a totalitarian state of establishing a monopoly of education."⁽²⁾

THE ADMINISTRATION:

Legislators, ministers, and trustees perform their functions with the assistance of administrative officials who wield very substantial power by advising their superiors and directing the schools.

The efficiency of any enterprise, governmental or otherwise, depends to a large extent on effective administration and on a careful balance between administrative functions and the carrying out of the purposes for which the enterprise is designed. Education is no exception for, like other branches of government which have expanded with increasing public responsibilities, it is now administered by an ever-enlarging hierarchy of officials. Like any other form of administration, however, it should be

(1) Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, Oxford ed. p. 177.

(2) I. L. Kandel, in "Modern Trends in Education", *Proceedings of the New Education Fellowship Conference*, A. E. Campbell (ed.), July, 1937, p. 4. Quoted in *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 1950, p. 199.

examined frequently from the standpoint of the limitations of administration which must always be compensated for if the system is to work.

Some general principles of public administration which apply in most departments are readily applicable to education and they should not be neglected. But some are not applicable for the simple reason that the educational system is a cultural organization which deals with the mind and character of man. As such it cannot be organized like an army or public works department. The mind and character of man and the means of influencing them have defied organization since the dawn of history, and an educational system which neglects that fact is doomed to perpetual strife.

Educational administrators include among their number some men of outstanding ability who have done much for education. But, because the limitations of their offices are not sufficiently provided for, they are placed in a position which does not make the best use of their talents, which too often encourages or forces them to hinder rather than help the schools, and which prevents their understanding the public and its opinions on education. Too much is expected of them for it is impossible for them to please, and keep a check on, the teachers, the public, the trustees, and the politicians as well as themselves.

The real weakness of the system is that the usual amateur-professional relationship, so general and so successful in most administration, is here complicated by the existence of *two* professional groups, one the administrators and the other the teachers, with a sharp dividing line between them and with one completely dominating the other and having exclusive contact with the executive. As a result, there are many levels of authority in the educational hierarchy and many middle-men between the top and bottom, between those who decide and those who perform. This unique dominance of administration is illustrated by the fact that departments of education are the only departments where the deputy-minister is called superintendent, chief superintendent, director, or chief director, and his subordinates follow after with equally impressive titles. Such titles do not fit in with a constitution which provides in most other things that an executive shall do the superintending and directing or with a profession which surely should not be the only one which requires such attention. In other words the well-known

principle that "experts" should be "on tap, not on top", is almost completely ignored.

In this connection Dr. Hilda Neatby has published recently a controversial but carefully documented book on Canadian education, which includes, among many observations, a serious indictment of the abilities and qualifications of "career educators" and of their "authoritarian and dogmatic" practices which "are approaching those of the police state", experts who "have magnified their office until . . . they have become totalitarian".⁽¹⁾ Dr. Neatby and other observers who have been similarly disturbed by the entrenched bureaucracy in education have produced much evidence and have made a strong case for reform. It would appear that this whole subject is not essentially a pedagogical matter, but a constitutional problem of the first magnitude requiring the application of elementary political science.

"The trouble", writes a distinguished teacher and administrator of long experience, "springs from two roots, from ignorance, on the part of the legislators, of the real function of teachers and schools, and from zealous tidy-mindedness on the part of the administrators. And there is developing, incidentally, a divergence of interest between the administrators and the people, whom, officially, they serve."⁽²⁾ Members of legislatures, cabinets and school boards are advised almost exclusively by administrators and they know little of the schools as working institutions. To the executive, problems tend to be administrative for they see little of the human factors and they often avoid difficulties by leaving them to officials. This isolation of the executive from the schools is neither wise nor logical when the state seeks to lay down so many regulations and conditions of work for so many people in so many institutions.

"Zealous tidy-mindedness" is a well-known occupational disease in any form of administration which for the sake of efficiency often destroys efficiency. There are many devices for counteracting it in public enterprise but they are not operative to any substantial degree in education. Consequently many benefits of administration are nullified by the regimentation which takes place. "One of the outstanding characteristics of Canadian education," says Dr. M. E. Lazerte, "has always been the high degree of control exercised by the provincial

(1) Hilda Neatby, *So Little For The Mind*, Toronto, Clarke, Irwin, 1953, especially pp. 55, 236 and 312-13.

(2) J. F. Wolfenden, "Intellectual Freedom and the Schools", in Dobinson (ed.) *Education in a Changing World*, Oxford, 1951, p. 52.

Departments of Education, a control that maintains certain basic minimum standards but, discouraging as it often does local initiative and experimentation, prevents progress in many districts and municipalities that might otherwise introduce and maintain standards quite above the average."⁽¹⁾ As a result the schools are imposed upon from above by a mass of regulations and orders and the teachers are forced to perform their functions within very narrow prescribed limits. This direction and rigidity restricts severely the intellectual freedom and professional pride so necessary to real teaching; indeed its mere existence on top of a powerless profession automatically relegates the latter to a position of inferiority. The depressed state of the teaching profession results largely from this form of administration. Capable and ambitious young people will enter the occupations which give ample scope for their talents. When invited into teaching many of them will say with the poet: "I can see the harness and the reins allright but where's the bloody horse."⁽²⁾

The school system as an administrative organization does not fit into the constitution of the country or conform to the prevailing ideas of democratic control. The history of Canada and of all its provinces during the past hundred and twenty-five years has featured the question of when and how a young country could assume the direction of its own affairs. Federalism is a concession to the need for local autonomy in local matters, and municipal administration permits the distribution of power still further. The development of cabinet government grew from the appropriate allocation of functions among political institutions. Great state enterprises, from the national railroad to the provincial university, have flourished on a combination of public ownership and independent administration. As for education, the constitution has divided power among the provinces, and the latter in turn have given a few functions to municipalities and their school trustees. But there the process stops.

There is virtually no responsible government or academic freedom in the schools. The teacher must follow the directions of an elaborate curriculum, teach a certain number of pages in certain prescribed text books in certain ways, and prepare pupils for external examinations. Inspectors and principals and other visitors, such as class mothers from the home and school association, drop in from time to time to observe the teacher at work

(1) M. E. Lazerte, *Teacher Education in Canada*. (Quance Lecture) 1950. p. 82.

(2) Quoted in John Jewkes, *Ordeal by Planning*, London, MacMillan, 1948, p. 163.

and report what they see. Fads and fashions are forced on unwilling schools for experimentation or for the satisfaction of pressure groups. There are no staff councils with legal status and protected powers over teaching matters. The principals do not sit regularly with those who decide the policy of the schools but have the policy handed down to them through intermediaries from a remote source. The principals have very little part in the appointing of teachers and they must share the direction of the school with many outside officials instead of their staffs. In short, the schools enjoy only a colonial status in a society which cherishes self-government in politics and free enterprise in business and professional life.

The same weaknesses are evident in the business management of the schools. The school budget is submerged in general funds so that school finances cannot be managed on a business basis. The schools are perpetually short of money for services, equipment, and repairs. What money they have they don't control; every proposed expenditure must be referred to an outside authority with the inevitable waste, delay and red tape. They can't save, invest, or plan, they must depend exclusively on other people's financial judgment. Inevitably they become like teen-aged boys without pocket money, naive in business and over-dependent on and impatient with their superiors.

With respect to training and licencing, teaching is the only profession where the profession itself has virtually no control and where full responsibility rests with the government. Normal schools are run directly by a government department, and university faculties of education are associated in their efforts with the government rather than with professional organizations. The teachers' licence is a state permit, not a certificate from a profession. Inevitably, therefore, an atmosphere of subordination and control is created from the first ambition to teach and maintained through all the subsequent stages.

The results of this system are well described by a Columbia University professor of education:

"The centralized system assumes control virtually over all aspects of education—the enactment of laws, decrees, and regulations, the limits of compulsory attendance, the establishment and closing of schools, the character of the school buildings, the preparation and certification of teachers, the curricula and courses of study and even methods of instruction in all types of schools, standards of achievement, textbooks, the prescription of salary scales, local administration, and the internal management of schools. Bureaucracy omits no detail, so that when the teacher confronts the pupils in a classroom, sometimes decorated and

adorned according to regulations, he becomes practically the mouth-piece of the central authority, a skilled craftsman very frequently but hewing to the line. Now the question which at once arises is whether this is education or propaganda; whether such a system does not destroy the character of the school as a human institution and of instruction as the impact of mind upon mind. Because the essence of such a system of administration is mechanization, the results are often mechanical, rigid, and formal, and superficially the pupils acquire a certain body of content which is neither their own nor their teachers'; it is in such systems that mass education is run at its worst. What is mechanized tends to be destroyed; what is over-organized tends to be killed."⁽¹⁾

These observations invite consideration of the proper arrangement of administrative agencies known in public administration as line and staff. In hierarchial structures, such as the army and large administrative departments, the line is the operating division and the staff is "an instrument for planning, for study, and for observation, not an instrument of action."⁽¹⁾ In most fields of government the departmental personnel perform the line functions, and the staff functions rest with planning boards, budget bureaus, research groups and the like. Executive direction of government departments with the purely advisory assistance of the staff functions represents the natural relations between executive and the line.

But education is different from other public enterprises. Here the line functions are performed, not by the department of education, but by the school principals and teachers. Yet the important contact between executive and line functions is interrupted by or channeled through staff agencies, and, consequently, neither the executive nor the line functions can be exercised to anything like this potential advantage. Moreover, there is no adequate check on the administration. The executive hasn't the knowledge or the time to question the administrators, and the schools which have the knowledge are not in a position to do it or to have their case heard directly and regularly by the executive.

The effective arrangement of executive, line and staff functions would appear to be even more important in education than in other public enterprises. For here the basic process is not action comparable to constructing roads and buildings, financing projects, or curing diseases, but an essentially intellectual function dealing with the cultivation of abilities. It can't be ordered, supervised, and inspected like mechanical projects and not be seriously hindered. Enlarged, or rather misplaced,

(1) I. L. Kandel, *Comparative Education*, pp. 215-17 quoted in *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario*, 1950, p. 199-200.

(1) L. D. White, *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration*, New York. MacMillan, 1948, p. 31.

staff services have been permitted to such an extent that this hindrance has automatically followed.⁽¹⁾

This point is further illustrated by contrasting university teaching in most major universities whether public or private. Universities are not free from troubles, far from it, but in educational controversies their troubles are much less spectacular than those of the schools. University teaching is not a depressed profession; it enjoys many attractions and much prestige; there is no real shortage of personnel. The great difference between the universities and their teachers and the schools and their teachers is not quality (there's good and bad in both) or function (their aims are basically the same even if their methods differ); it is in administration. By and large direct political contact and administrative processes are kept small in the universities and the teachers themselves have a large share in making the policy. The provincial legislatures establish and empower all universities and with certain exceptions the governments leave them alone. The departments of education have no significant control over them. The board of governors maintains continuous contact with the president or principal and those who teach. The staff participates directly in deciding policy through representation in the senate or faculty council and in making appointments. And at the instructor level there is virtually no restriction on either method or content. There are officials but their administrative functions are properly coordinated with teaching. The deans are teachers and they generally don't give up teaching for administration. The registrar and bursar have much to do, but they are closely associated with and do not overshadow the teachers themselves. Great teaching does not require promotion to administration as a means of recognition or reward. The president or principal has much power, but he is a member of the board of governors and is responsible directly to it, and he presides over a senate which is in a position both to advise him and to keep him in check. University administration has many attributes of

(1) "A variety of influences," says J. F. Wolfenden, "has produced a situation to which headmasters react, according to their temperament, with expatiation, bitterness, or despair, and which, at the very least, calls for serious and thorough investigation. . . I do not suggest that my friends in the Ministry of education and in the office of the local education authorities spend their days and nights deliberately designing ways of limiting the liberty of those who live and work in the schools. But as a matter of practical fact that is what happens, very largely by accident and very slightly by design."

"At present", says J. G. Althouse, "every year seems to bring its own emergencies, so that bureaucratic policy-making often appears advantageous at least to the employed experts, who are concerned in securing practical results. But in fields like that of education, the autonomy of employed experts is particularly dangerous. It can lead, on the one hand, to an exploitation of the schools that will menace freedom. On the other hand, when expert policy-making diverges farther and farther from public opinion, it can lead to a complete divorce of education from practical life, and so to the impotence of educative institutions."

responsible government upon which the country itself is governed. Like the constitution it is not perfect, but it combines a large measure of democracy with an appropriate system of checks and balances to make it practicable.

The present school system is evidently based on the desire for uniformity and supervision. Theoretically they seem logical requirements for efficiency but, in practice, the first is elusive and the second is enervating. The basic factors in education are the abilities and characters of the teachers and pupils and there is no uniformity in them. And any process of supervising the output and intake of the mind has always proved restrictive, dull, and mediocre. Forced uniformity on a large scale inevitably emphasizes the minimum or the average which, in life, is not good enough, or, what is worse, leads to the convoy system in education—in which all proceed at the pace of the slowest. A system of imposed regulations, the result of uniformity, cannot encourage initiative and satisfaction on the part either of those who teach or those who learn, for the variables in education are too numerous. In any event it will be uniformity in name only so long as the basic problems of finance and teacher supply are left unsettled.

Concessions to human nature, so numerous in politics, should also be made in education. This point applies particularly to supervision. Supervision is necessary, of course, for immature individuals and institutions; but maturity everywhere demands responsibility. Politics long ago learned to replace supervision with responsibility because, while they exist for the same reason, to control, the second is far more effective than the first. The history of state offices and institutions, like family and other human relationships, proves that the aims of supervision are easily destroyed by an excess of it or even by its very presence.

Education leads almost all other activities in the urge for centrally directed uniformity and supervision. "The administrative camel," says one observer, "has crowded the intellectual pilgrim right out of his tent".⁽¹⁾ By contrast, freedom and difference is encouraged within very broad limits in other occupations, yet there is a high degree of uniformity in them. There are no inspectors or directors of doctors, lawyers, judges, clergymen, or politicians. They would rebel against regulation comparable to supervisory functions, curriculum control, and peda-

(1) Hans Zinsser, quoted by Chancellor E. P. Scarlett in "The Net of Truth", Humanities Research Council of Canada Pamphlet, 1953.

gogical technique. Yet in an even more complicated field, educators force uniformity and direction which do little more than keep teaching in a perpetual state of immaturity.

Low salaries are everywhere blamed for the situation. Actually they are the result of the basic weakness. Almost everyone from doctor to plumber gets what he can command, or what his profession sets down. The teachers' lack of responsibility, on the other hand, prevents them from setting the conditions of their own remuneration and keeps the good teachers' salaries at the same level as those of the poor ones. Under a system of responsibility they may get very little more, but there will be less emphasis on salary because they have some control of it. Actually the conditions of the work and the dignity of the profession are far more important than the salary. For example, university salaries which are earned with high qualifications, are very low when compared with those of other professions, in some cases even with school teaching; and yet there is no shortage or turnover of university professors in the major universities. If a good teacher is not trusted he will leave his job whether he is paid well or not.

RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT:

The thesis of this paper raised the question: Why not responsible government in the schools. It is here suggested that the granting of such a system to schools which are large and efficient enough to make it work would be an educational reform of the greatest importance. Responsible government works well in most other enterprises and universities have proved that it is practicable in education. Schools, it must be emphasized, differ widely in many respects from universities, but, nevertheless, why can't the same principles of administration apply.

Under a system of responsible government large schools could be run by their own individual boards of trustees in respect to business matters and general policy, and by the principals and faculty councils in teaching matters with the necessary administrative functions exercised within the schools. Each school would have its own budget, supply estimates of its needs, receive its funds and spend them itself, and report in detail to the governing authority. If schools can be trusted with the minds of children surely they can be relied upon to handle their own funds. The school councils would decide upon the curriculum and the standards and would lay down

and enforce the necessary regulations respecting attendance, conduct and extra-curricular activities. The principals would be members of the boards of trustees and responsible thereto, and, as chairmen of the staff councils, would be effective links between the teachers and the trustees. Small schools could be organized in similar fashion now that large units of school administration are becoming more popular.

In such a system public responsibility would be maintained through the enabling statutes, the necessary public audit, and annual reports to the trustees and legislature. Political interference and bureaucracy would be exceptional, or rather they would be subjected to careful scrutiny. The necessary checks and balances would be provided within the institutions themselves. Professional prestige and intellectual freedom would be greatly encouraged and, consequently, the conditions of work and the results of work would be much improved. The fact that such improvements have followed self-government in many other enterprises is an encouraging portent for such an educational reform.

It might be said that this system would lead to too much diversity in curriculum and standards. Actually uniformity of the most desirable kind is likely to be achieved by leaving the schools to find their own levels of efficiency. Schools with self-government, wise leadership, and good teaching tend to turn out graduates with the same basic training and the fact that they are not regimented will enable them to do it all the better. As for schools with poor leadership and teaching, uniformity has done little for them, and self-government might well improve them. In cultural processes it is easier to be weak than strong under direct political control, especially if state-determined uniformity tends to be, what Mill called it, "a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another."⁽¹⁾

It might also be suggested that such a system would weaken public control over the schools. Actually such control would be strengthened, for the government, by appointing persons to run the schools directly, giving them power, and leaving them alone, would be ensuring far better interested direction and responsibility and relieving itself of details which it is not equipped to handle. The functions of departmental officials would be performed and their talents utilised within instead of outside

(1) Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

the schools and the teaching profession. In this way the limitations of the executive and administration in education would be compensated for, yet their advantages would be maintained. The state, it must be emphasized, would still provide and define the necessary powers, but it would permit the schools and the profession to exercise them under suitable conditions of responsibility.

As for the public, particularly children and their parents, the schools are actually far more familiar with it than are politicians and civil servants. There are some academic ivory towers, but, as any study of government reveals, there are administrative sky scrapers which are even more isolated from the common man. If the schools are responsible for their own affairs they will find, or be forced by necessity to find, their own appropriate means of influencing, and being influenced by, public opinion. Moreover, the schools are in a better position than government to prevent the harmful effects of too much pressure from public opinion.

All this is nothing more than the granting to the school system, its principals and its teachers of liberty, and of the instrument for making liberty practical, responsibility. The theory and practice of democracy have been based on liberty since man first talked of democracy, and the British system of constitutional government has for centuries been developed so as to combine liberty with responsibility. Experience has shown that man works best under this arrangement, particularly when the work concerns his mind and spirit. "Set a man free," says Sir Richard Livingston in his *Education and the Spirit of the Age*, "and you widen the range of his mind, give scope to his capacities and stimulate him to climb to that height in human nature which is within his reach. Restrict his freedom—and some restriction is inevitable—and in so far you cramp his powers, discourage their use, and stunt his growth".⁽¹⁾ In this respect education should take the lead, for to a large extent it is on the effectiveness of the educational process that the future of the nation depends. What will make this process work to its full potential is not buildings, curricula, or direction, but teachers with ability and devotion. There are many now, but to attract more and to keep them, the schools and the teaching profession need to be trusted so that their personnel, status, and efforts will be worthy of their responsibilities.

(1) Sir Richard Livingston, *Education and the Spirit of the Age*, Oxford, 1952, p. 9.