



QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations

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Response to the Question

"What is the Nature of the Protestant School System at this Time?"

for the

Protestant Committee of the Superior Council of Education

April 11, 1986

Montreal



A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN HOME AND SCHOOL AND PARENT-TEACHER FEDERATION

Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations (QFHSA) is pleased to be part of the consultation process with the Protestant milieu on the nature of the Protestant school, undertaken this year by the Protestant Committee. Time did not permit us to circulate widely the question "What is the Nature of the Protestant School System in Quebec at this Time?", but it was discussed by the Board of Directors and a representative number of our local association members were consulted. It is also important to point out that while the membership by local association in QFHSA is within the Protestant school system, as defined by our Letters Patent, individual family membership is open to all. Both the QFHSA Constitution and that of its parent organization, The Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, states that we are non-sectarian. Having said that, we are well aware of the role that Home & School Associations play in the Protestant school system where parent volunteers are in close contact with students, teachers and administrators who make up the system known as Protestant.

In attempting to answer the question above we will give you the opinions expressed under the headings suggested in your letter.

1. DEFINITION OF THE WORD 'PROTESTANT'

Protestant involves a pluralist approach to the basic Judaeo-Christian philosophy which forms the basis of the school system. It means a recognition of the many diverse religions and cultures in society and being tolerant and open toward other peoples' beliefs.

Protestant is recognized as 'denominational' within the meaning of the Canadian Constitution but the school system is considered non-denominational in outlook. To be Protestant is to be aware of the rich heritage and tradition in which there is a strong foundation of values and morals. Protestant never means to be neutral.

2. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROTESTANT SCHOOL?

- It is open to all regardless of one's religious persuasion.
- It instills respect for the rights of the individual so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others. It allows parents to exempt their children from the Moral and Religious program.
- It adapts in attempting to respond to the needs of the diverse and pluralistic clientele it serves.
- It is concerned with the teaching of values (including religious values) and morals which are basic in a democratic pluralistic society.

3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PART OF A PROTESTANT SYSTEM?

Many feel the Protestant school system represents the 'public' school system in Quebec because it is open to all, pluralistic and non-sectarian. It is a belief that the Protestant system cultivates individual potential and growth, promotes democratic participation and has a deep respect for parental rights in education. It is a system which has a rich tradition of openness which allows it to serve the needs of all.

4. HOW DO YOU SEE THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM EVOLVING?

There is a strong feeling that the system is not evolving if one thinks of it as moving ahead, getting better. Right now the Protestant

system is struggling to maintain the status quo, lacks funds and has an uncertain future re declining enrolments. The system cannot evolve according to its own philosophy while it has elements imposed on it by the M.E.Q. which does not share its philosophy - for example, the new curriculum (régimes pédagogiques). It is a system offering a fairly high standard of education which is being watered down as demands become excessive - too many new courses introduced at one time, demands re second language courses and teaching, lack of support services which is of great concern to parents, limits on financing education and declining enrolments. Allowing the present Protestant system to evolve into two linguistic systems, French and English, would involve careful consultation and discussion. See the attached QFHSR Resolutions 83/18E and 85/21 attached to this report.

The expression of opinion on question 4 is somewhat pessimistic since it clearly suggests that the Protestant community has lost some of its former power to adapt, change and mold its educational system to suit its own philosophy. However, on the optimistic side, it is worth quoting from the synopsis by Colin Irving, Q.C., of the judgement and the reasons for judgement handed down by Judge Brossard re Law 3 on June 25, 1985.

The judgment contains a concise and accurate description of what constitutes a "Protestant" school based on the evidence given at trial, particularly that of Dr. John Simms. Thus for the first time there is judicial recognition of the philosophical basis of the Protestant school system and a recognition that although it is pluralist in approach, it is nevertheless denominational within the meaning of the Constitution.

One further quote from Quest for Quality in the Protestant Public Schools of Québec by Nathan H. Mair (1980).

Our study of the purposes of education in Quebec Protestant schools has revealed a plurality of aims, shaping and re-shaping themselves through the decades in the images required by contemporary societies. The lack of acceptance, for any lengthy period, of a single over-riding purpose is perhaps testimony to the Protestant penchance for continually reopening life's profoundest questions for further exploration. (p.45)

Both of these recent quotations find expression in the opinions of QFHSA members who responded to your questions.

CONCLUSION

In answer to the central question "what is the nature of the Protestant school system in Quebec at this time?" we can only conclude that it is recognized both by the courts and by the public it serves as a system based on a particular philosophy of education, pluralistic in nature, denominational within the meaning of the Canadian Constitution but non-denominational in its approach to the teaching of religious and moral values to its clientele. It is not neutral. It is a public school system which attempts to meet the diverse cultural and religious needs of its population. However, various restrictions placed upon the system by the laws affecting education in Quebec make it necessary for the Protestant community to explore new strategies, new ways and means of adapting itself to contemporary society. This is the process of 'evolving' which is probably the greatest challenge to be faced in the coming months.



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RESOLUTION 83/18 CONFSSIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS

WHEREAS the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations is involved in a court case on Bill 101, and

WHEREAS the thrust of our case is based on articles in the B.N.A. Act which guarantees Protestant and Roman Catholic Education, and

WHEREAS this section of the B.N.A. Act guarantees Confessional Education both Protestant and Roman Catholic in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations take the stand that any changes in our present education structures must in no way affect the present status of Confessional School Boards until there are Canadian constitutional guarantees for elected English language school board systems with administrative and pedagogical English language support services.

Background

As one of the most important sections in our Bill 101 case defends the right for parents to choose either a Protestant or Roman Catholic school according to their beliefs, and Bill 101 denies this right by forcing Protestant children in many of our areas to attend French Roman Catholic schools, the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations feels that it must support strongly the issue of Confessionality in any reorganizational plan that affects our schools.

On November 21, 1981, the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations' Board of Directors passed the above statement in response to the first 'leaked' documents suggesting a massive change to the educational structures in Quebec. Since then the Task Force has used it as a basis for examining all further documentation on school reform, including the White Paper.

We wish to have the statement passed as a resolution at this 1983 Annual General Meeting. This resolution on confessionality of school boards will be necessary in the event of upcoming legislation to restructure the existing confessional school boards.





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RESOLUTION 85/21 RIGHTS FOR OTHER MINORITIES

WHEREAS by its Resolution 83/18E QFHSA endorsed the retention of confessional school boards until there are Canadian constitutional guarantees for an elected English language school board system, and

WHEREAS the fastest growing segment of the confessional school board system in Quebec is that of the Franco-Protestants, and

WHEREAS the Ontario Court of Appeal in its decision in the summer of 1984 regarding the constitutional educational rights of Franco-Ontarians under Section 23 of the Constitution Act, 1982, ruled they should have exclusive budgetary control of their linguistic segment within the existing confessional school board system,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that QFHSA call on the Quebec Association of Protestant School Boards to investigate and report on the modalities of granting Franco-Protestants in Quebec exclusive budgetary control of their linguistic segment within the existing confessional school board system.

DESTINATION: Quebec Association of Protestant School Boards

Background

Dissentient and confessional school rights are not identical in Quebec and Ontario. However, the protection of such rights in both provinces derives from Section 93, The Constitution Act, 1867, and from subsequently expanded provisions in regard to minority official language educational rights under The Constitution Act, 1982. The decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal is being appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. When the latter rules, it will govern educational rights in both Ontario and Quebec. Therefore it is important that our school boards in Quebec be ready for such change when it comes about.

