

Vancouver Sun April 19, 2003

The Myth of the Neutral Public School¹

On April 19 (“Critic of...”), you distinguish sharply between the public and the parochial. That distinction assumes the equation of public schools with neutrality, a popular equation in Canada that represents "common sense." From there it moved up to the status of universal and unassailable truth. But "common sense" is always local, while it is often regarded as nonsense elsewhere. Any historian of thought will tell you that today's Canadian "common sense" will have succeeding generations of Canadians scratch their heads in puzzlement. Common sense is only a local and temporary blip in the history of thought; it keeps moving.

The equation of public schools with neutrality is one of these "common sense" items. It is already being rejected in places where it once reigned supreme, especially universities. The pressures from post-modernism, multi-culturalism and various religions are ushering it out. And rightly so, for the public, no less than the parochial, rests on a *belief system*, neither of which is based on "natural" reason. The underpinnings of the public system constitute a set of beliefs or assumptions that cannot be proven any more than can those of the parochial.

Oh, and who pays for that public system, if not the supporters of the parochial along with others? Does anyone ever question why the adherents to our current common sense—the faith of the establishment-- should pay for only one system, the public system, while those who adhere to another faith are forced to support a faith system they do not share?

¹Letter to the Editor, *VS*, 19 Apr/2003. *Every Square Inch*, vol. 4, p. 102.