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John Tory's new promise to allow MPPs to vote on extending school funding to all faiths may get him more votes, but growing public awareness of the injustice of solely funding Catholic schools still needs to be addressed in a more radical way.

Those with long memories might recall a couple of my passionately argued columns in the past in favour of extending full funding to faith-based schools outside the Roman Catholic system. Basic justice, as even the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has strongly observed, seemed to demand it. What's more, I had personal tangible evidence of the inequity involved: in the quest for a Christian setting for the education of my three children, I was paying fees – first of all to a private Anglican school and then, when it moved out to Oakville, to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School in downtown Toronto.

As well, in the spring of 1979, on the plane carrying us all to Rome, the Archbishop of Toronto, on the eve of being made a cardinal, had encouraged my hopes in this regard by intimating that once he had the red hat, he fully intended to lobby the Bill Davis government, not just for full funding for the Catholic schools, but for a fair extension of funds to others as well. I felt sure that with the right encouragement, (Archbishop G. Emmett) Carter would act on this casual pledge, especially when, in 1984, he got what he needed for his own system from the retiring premier. He never did.

However, I now realize that my former position was completely and utterly mistaken.

From whatever insight wrestled out of the intervening years of research, travel and observation, I believe that the approach today with the most potential for a fully balanced education for our students is that of providing no funding whatever for any religious grouping.

Daily, this viewpoint is shared by more and more Ontarians.

The position being taken by the Green Party on this makes the best sense and promises most for the future – whatever one makes of the rest of their platform.

We cannot continue to employ tired and deceptive rhetoric about how the status quo is "all one public system."

On the other hand, extending funding to all faiths would simply shatter the social fabric further with a plethora of denominations. And what of that significantly growing portion of the population who, according to the latest census figures (about 17 per cent), say they have "no religion" at all? Must they carry the freight for beliefs and outlooks they no longer cherish?

The proper place for spiritual formation and "faith" in a specific religion is in the home, the temple, the church, or the synagogue.

However, the subject of religion plays far too large a role both in contemporary affairs and in the literature and history of Canada and the rest of the world to be simply cast aside.

We are being given a unique opportunity just now for a wholly fresh approach to the subject. World religion courses should be taught at all levels by competent teachers and with the full seriousness of any other subject in the context of helping young people understand the contribution religion has made to the world, as well as the problems it has created.

To the British North America Act fundamentalists who say "we can't change what was once laid down" and insist we need to maintain the present injustice of Catholic school funding, it should be pointed out that no major social advance in modern history has ever come without constitutional adjustments being made.

In today's vastly changed Canada, it's time for one now.

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