

If you value Catholic education, now is the time to speak up

On Thursday, February 8, 2018, I had an opportunity to debate David King, a former Alberta PC minister of education, on the resolution "Alberta should have one public school system, not two." Both King and I had approximately 15 minutes each to speak, then a short time to ask each other questions, after which the audience was invited to ask us questions.

It is extraordinary to hear a former minister of education attack Catholic education, not just Catholic separate schools, claiming that it is questionable whether Catholic school graduates would be prepared to participate in a civil democratic society, and that the separateness of Catholic schools was equivalent to South African apartheid.

Further, he denied that Catholic separate schools had a legal right to exist, claiming it was merely privilege! He also claimed huge savings would result from having one education system.

Not once in his talk did he ever supply any empirical or anecdotal evidence for any of his assertions.

Worse, he made assertions which he must have known to be untrue, if he had done any research in the area, and he repeated them the following day on radio; for example, that Catholic schools would not allow controversial student clubs. All in all King took a demagogic tact, repeating uniformed positions and misrepresenting facts in order to play to an audience.

King also has claimed that he would support public spending for 30 per cent of Catholic schools *and then* argued for no funding for Catholic schools.

He argued that Catholic schools do not teach civil democratic values to students *and then* stated that Catholic schools did a good job at education.

To say that his presentation was full of inconsistencies and was schizophrenic in nature would be an understatement.

- We know that Alberta has one of the best institutions of education in the world, as established by independent researchers.
- We know that Catholic education serves the common good in Alberta and that its students are justifiably proud of their schools.
- We know that fiscally it makes no sense to unite both public systems, as there is no evidence that savings will accrue and that it would cause great social disruption.
- We know that non-Catholics – people of many faiths – support us in our goal of preserving constitutionally protected Catholic separate schools in

Alberta.

Notwithstanding the above, King and others will repeat falsehoods, misrepresent facts, and make outrageous claims against Catholic education in an attempt to end its constitutional protection.

If King is successful, the attacks will continue, as then governments will impose the teaching of secular values, which conflict with sacred values, on to Catholic students.

Like a frog in a pot of water which is slowly being heated to the boiling point, once Catholics realize what they have done in not vigorously opposing King and his ilk, it will be far too late to save Catholic schools which teach the values of the faith.

What may be done to protect the legacy of Catholic schools given to us by those who sacrificed and went before us? That is the important question for the laity, religious, and clergy in Alberta.

Make no mistake; the opposition to Catholic schools is fired up and its opposition to constitutionally protected Catholic schools is fiercely being carried out in the public square.

Yet where are the unafraid Catholics publicly taking up that battle – facing down political correctness – and understanding and accepting the personal price they will pay?

I do not see them.

My experience is that Catholic school supporters tend to consult each other and only speak to those who already agree with them. Perhaps it is as Yeats said in his poem, *The Second Coming*:

***Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.***

Let us hope this is not so.

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