

tories the right even to see it or examine it before it was finally decided upon.

Sir, the conclusion of the whole matter seems plain. The very basis of confederation, contemplating the eventual inclusion of all British North America, provided for separate schools in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec only. This provision was the result of compact and agreement. But no restrictions on provincial powers were contemplated in the Northwest. None are mentioned in the Quebec resolutions. The terms of the constitution, if applied in their integrity to the new provinces, do not, in my humble opinion, restrict the powers of the provincial legislature. The people of the Northwest are, I believe, opposed to any such restrictions. We have passed resolutions in this parliament in favour of home rule for Ireland. Shall five and a half millions of people of Canada deprive half a million of people in the Territories of that home rule which is theirs under the terms of the constitution? Shall we, despite the terms of our national charter, impose upon a small minority of the people of Canada a restriction which they will always resent and against which they will always struggle? Are the people of the Northwest competent to receive the rights of self government? Why then should they not receive the same rights which were conferred upon the people of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, and which are now enjoyed by them? In the provinces of Ontario and Quebec there is, it is true, a compact which is embodied in our constitution and which has always been—and must always be—observed for that very reason. But at the same time let us not forget that, if I am correctly informed, the rights of the minority in Ontario to-day are greater than they were at the time of confederation in respect of separate schools. That does not look like any desire or intention to coerce. Is there any oppression of the minority in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island? I can speak best for my own province, and I do not know that such question very much agitates its people. There is a *modus vivendi*, an understanding, an arrangement arrived at. Let no man suppose that I do not respect the attitude of Catholics with regard to this matter. No one can for a moment fail to realize the position, so far as they are concerned. They say: It is a matter of our faith that our children should be under instructors of their own faith, that they should receive religious instruction at school; and so strongly do we adhere to that principle that we would rather pay the state tax and also support our own schools than submit to any other system. I find no fault with that view. I only desire that such matters should be left to the people of the respec-

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

tive provinces and not be placed in the wide area of Dominion politics. Is there any reason to mistrust the people of the Northwest Territories? Are they disposed to be less generous than the people of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island? What does my right hon. friend himself say on that question? I have already pointed out what he has said with regard to the use of the French language as an official language of the Northwest of Canada. He was ready to trust that to the good sense of the people to their instinct of justice and fair play, and I venture to think to-day that if this question had not been hurled into the political arena by the right hon. gentleman, there would never have been the slightest hesitation in the Northwest of Canada about continuing those privileges to the Catholics which they now enjoy. One of my hon. friends on the other side smiles at the idea. Well, he is at liberty to enjoy his own opinion; but I venture to say that there is no reason why we should suspect the honesty, good faith and fair play of these people. I have never heard very much complaint in my own province, and while I respect the people of that province as highly as those of any other in Canada—although they did not treat me very well at the last election—I am not disposed to admit that there would be in the Northwest less generosity, less fair play, less sense of what is right and due to the minority than there is in the province of Nova Scotia. What did my right hon. friend himself say on this question? May I not appeal from the Sir Wilfrid Laurier of to-day to the plain Wilfrid Laurier of years ago? He said in 1890:—

I have no reason to suppose, and I do not for one moment suppose, that the people of the Northwest Territories would act unjustly or unfairly towards the French minority.

Well, my hon. friend may smile at my words, but he will surely admit that his leader is as well qualified to express an opinion on that subject as he is himself. And further on the Prime Minister says:

The smallest measure of conciliation is far preferable to any measure of coercion.

And did he not in his speech the other day appeal to that Canadian spirit of tolerance and charity of which confederation is the essence? And he went on to say, on another occasion, referring to the treatment of the minority in his own fair province of Quebec by those who are his fellow countrymen:

I am glad to say, and perhaps it would be permitted if in this matter, being myself a son of the province of Quebec, I indulged in what may not be an altogether unpardonable pride when I say that I am not aware that the Protestant minority ever had any cause of complaint of the treatment they had received at the hands of the majority.