

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN THE NORTHWEST.

House resumed adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the second reading of Bill (No. 69) to establish and provide for the government of the province of Alberta, and the amendment of Mr. R. L. Borden, thereto.

Mr. R. A. PRINGLE (Cornwall and Stormont). Mr. Speaker, I fully recognize that the question we are now discussing is one of the most important that has come before the House, at any rate since I have had the honour of having a seat in this parliament. Representing as I do my native constituency; a constituency in which there are all classes, all creeds, and all nationalities which go to make up our great Canadian national life, I feel that I am not representing here the sentiment of Protestants alone, nor the sentiments of Roman Catholics alone, but I feel it is my duty to endeavour to arrive at a conclusion on this subject upon grounds which can appeal to the conscience of all men, irrespective of their particular faith. I have the good fortune to speak in this debate after the hon. member for Strathcona (Mr. P. Talbot), a gentleman for whom I have a very high esteem; a gentleman who was in charge of one of the largest educational institutions in my town for years, and a gentleman who took a very active and prominent part in one of the strongest Protestant organizations in the county of Stormont. I was much pleased to hear his opinions in regard to the school system in the Northwest Territories, because I know that the hon. gentleman having had wide experience in educational matters, not only in eastern Canada but in western Canada was in a position to speak authoritatively on the matter. The hon. gentleman (Mr. P. Talbot) has told us what the present position of educational matters in the Northwest Territories is, and it is well that we should consider that position of affairs in connection with the consideration of the proposals contained in the present Bill. The hon. member for Strathcona has told us that in his opinion the educational system in the Northwest Territories to-day is the best in the Dominion of Canada, and, as a reason for this belief he quoted from the Ordinances of 1901, to which I shall refer later. Sir, in forming our opinion on this question it is well that we should go back in Canadian history, in order that we may thoroughly understand the genesis of the whole issue. I shall not detain the House with a recital of what occurred away back in the fifties; I shall not detain the House with the story of what occurred in the province of Ontario in 1863. We know that the Liberal-Conservative party was formed in 1854; we know that the policy of the Liberal-Conservative party was a most generous and broad-minded policy, and we know that it met with the greatest opposi-

tion from those who in that day were known as the clear Grits; from the faction which George Brown controlled in that province. I have here quotations from the 'Globe' newspaper from 1854 down to 1863, then as now the organ of the Liberal party, and I think it would surprise some of the hon. gentlemen opposite if I were to show them the action taken at that time by the Liberals in Ontario. Let me simply say that in the 'Globe' of August 1857, our French Canadian Conservatives under George E. Cartier were described as 'the Pope's brass band.' That was the keynote of the agitation that was kept up year in and year out throughout the province of Ontario, against the Conservative party led by the Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald. And, Sir, I could speak of the agitation led by the 'Globe' at a later date in 1896, and I could speak of the position taken by the 'Globe' in this very year in reference to the Bill now before the House. But, Sir, there is no room in this land for the ventilation of extreme opinions on the one side or the other, for we all know that our great progress has been brought about by just and honourable compromise between the people of different religions and different nationalities. Our confederation itself was a compromise. The Canadian statesmen of that day had to compromise; concessions had to be made between the representatives of the different provinces who met to lay the foundations of our union. And, Sir, I may justly claim that the Conservative party played a very important part in laying the basis of that union. For years after confederation the Conservative party wielded the destinies of this country, and when they were called upon to lay down the reins of office they were able to hand over to their successors a united British North America, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the only portion of the King's possessions not included being the colony of Newfoundland. It is therefore that I can justly claim that the history of the Conservative party is a history of which this young nation may well be proud.

I come now to the acquisition of the Northwest Territories by the Dominion of Canada. I am not going to argue that there is any moral obligation upon the people of this country to do justice to the minority in the Northwest; I shall leave that entirely for the House to say. But, let us look back on the history of these Territories to the year 1869, and let us see the position of educational matters then. There had for years previously existed in that country a number of schools for children. These schools were denominational schools, some of them being regulated and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church and others by various Protestant denominations. The moneys necessary for the support of the Roman Catholic schools were supplied to some extent by school fees paid by some of the parents of