

Another question which we had proposed to put had reference to the educational system of Lower Canada. The hon. gentleman (Sir John A. Macdonald) must be aware that this was a question on which there was a great deal of feeling in this section of the province amongst the English speaking or Protestant class of the population. Among that class there was no phase or feature of those threatened changes which excited so much alarm as this very question of education.

The hon. gentleman was then representing the county of Chateauguay, he was an English speaking Protestant in the province of Quebec. He goes on :

Well, the Minister of Finance had said that the government would bring down amendments to the school laws of Lower Canada, which they proposed enacting into law before a change of government should take place, and which would become a permanent settlement of that question. The question he desired to put was whether they intended to submit these amendments before they asked the House to pass finally upon the scheme of confederation, as it would undoubtedly exercise very considerable influence upon the discussion of the confederation scheme, and probably in the last resort from several members from Lower Canada.

Now, Mr. Chairman, do you not see how prudent he was ? There is an important example for many of us. Mr. Holton knew the French Canadians perfectly, he was elected by French Canadians, he sat for Chateauguay during all the time he sat in this parliament. He sat after confederation for a Montreal division in the local house. He knew the French Canadians well, he knew how broad they were, how generous they were, but in spite of that he insisted upon having a guarantee. He would not even take the word of the Minister of Finance when he said : We will see that a law is passed. But he insisted. He said : I want to see the law because it will have some effect upon the vote which is to be given. Later on he comes to the conclusion that :

The English Protestants of Lower Canada desire to know what is to be done in the matter of education before the final voice of the people of this country is pronounced on the question of confederation. To this statement Sir John Macdonald replied : There was a good deal of apprehension in Lower Canada, on the part of the minority there, as to the possible effects of confederation on their rights on the subject of education, and it was the intention of the government, if parliament approved the scheme of confederation, to lay before the House this session certain amendments to the school law to operate as a sort of guarantee against any infringement by the majority of the rights of the minority in this matter.

Which majority ? The Roman Catholic majority against the Protestant majority.

Before confederation is adopted the government would bring down a measure to amend the school law of Lower Canada protecting the rights of the minority.

Who were the men who were exacting a promise and more than a promise, exacting a law ? They were the representatives of the Protestant minority. They wanted to be sure there would be a law to protect the Protestant minority of Quebec before they consented to the scheme of confederation. But, Mr. Holton was not satisfied with the answer of Sir John Macdonald. He said :

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance—

The Minister of Finance was a Protestant too. Throughout the course of the session, Mr. Holton was very persistent and he came back to the question every day.

I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Finance as to the course to be pursued in reference to the Lower Canada School Law, which was promised to be introduced this session.

To this the like reply was made as before, but still Mr. Holton was not satisfied, and repeatedly thereafter he brought up the question again, indicating the intense interest felt in the situation by the Protestants of Lower Canada. Mr. Sanborn, another Protestant representative from Lower Canada, gave expression to the same feeling as follows :

The English, who were a fourth of the population, and who, by habit and tradition, had their own views of public policy, were left entirely without guarantee other than the good feelings and tolerant spirit of the French. Was this safe ?

Mr. Sanborn represented a county in Quebec, the population of which was half French Canadian, and still he wanted to be sure of having a law before he consented to the scheme of confederation. Sir John Rose, one of the most prominent representatives of the lower Canadian minority expressed his sense of the keen feeling that prevailed among his people in these terms :

It is a very grave and anxious question for us to consider, especially the minority in Lower Canada, how far our mutual rights and interests are respected and guarded.

Sir George Cartier answered Sir John Rose as follows :

It is the intention of the government that in that law there will be a provision that will secure the Protestant minority in Lower Canada such management and control over their schools as will satisfy them.

Mr. Chairman, in the presence of a vast majority who do not think as I do in regard to this question, I want to know if we are not justified in asking to-day that the rights and privileges which we have enjoyed and which men like Sir John Rose, Mr. Holton, Mr. Sanborn and others, representing the Protestant minority of Quebec, so sincerely and perseveringly demanded on behalf of the minority in Quebec, shall not be taken away from us. I see that Mr. Haultain also took part in this discussion. I wonder if that gentleman is the father