

ies. In fact, Sir, this idea had rather been opposed by hon. gentlemen opposite when, on more than one occasion, legislation of that kind had been proposed on this side of the House. And it is a notorious fact that the proposal that there should be provincial autonomy with a system of separate schools fixed upon the province was practically unheard of up to the last campaign. Hon. gentlemen opposite have on different occasions seen fit to shirk responsibility for important legislation by resorting to plebiscites. That was the case in what was known as the temperance legislation of the Dominion. It was within the power of a strong government to bring about the enactment of so-called temperance legislation. And yet this government, when they had an opportunity to legislate on that subject, shrank from the task and took refuge behind the ramparts of a so-called plebiscite. Why did not they, as they had no mandate from the people on this school question, refer the matter to a plebiscite? The reason is manifest. These hon. gentlemen knew well that they had stolen a march upon the people and were anxious for a five years to run their course after this legislation was passed with the hope that the question might meantime be forgotten.

The Prime Minister, in introducing this Bill on February 21st, made an address which certainly was not likely to conciliate all classes or to allay feeling. The principle feature of that address was a discussion of the utility or advantage of separate schools. The right hon. gentleman must have known, and, judging by the forced speech he made, he did know, that he would draw upon himself the fire of those opposed to separate schools in this country whether in this province or the new provinces. The right hon. gentleman seems to have taken it into his head that there was only one way to drive this Bill through parliament, and that was by means of the bludgeon of force. Aside from the reference to separate schools, which was the prominent feature of his address, one of the startling statements made by him was that the government, in the introduction of this Bill—I refer particularly to the educational clauses—were threatened on both sides. Surely, the right hon. gentleman received no threats from the Conservative press. The fact is that the right hon. gentleman was threatened by men on his own side, and those threats have been carried into force in a very plain manner. Where is the press of this country on this question? Go into the great province of Ontario, and I challenge hon. gentlemen opposite to name one newspaper on the Liberal side that is not opposed to this Bill.

Go into the province of Quebec and where does the Montreal 'Witness' stand, a journal that has always stood behind the right hon. gentleman and his party? Where does the Huntingdon 'Gleaner'

stand, a party organ, and has been such for years gone by? So I might go on and cite what is known as the county press, the weekly newspapers in Ontario, strongest on the Liberal side in the past. These are the journals that to-day are denouncing the right hon. gentleman and his government for the course they are taking. Come into this House and what an astonishing spectacle is presented. The strongest denunciation of the policy of the government was made by the hon. member for Brandon, an ex-minister of the cabinet. While it is quite true that his course has not been followed by many other gentlemen, it was followed by the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. L. McCarthy)—and there is not a more subservient follower of the government than that hon. gentleman—and by my hon. friend from South Perth (Mr. McIntyre), who is an independent, for the fact is well known in the locality in which he resides that he is not an office seeker, he is not one who is looking for favours from this government and the very fact that the government cannot hold on this occasion the vote of that hon. gentleman must be as gall and wormwood to the Postmaster General and the Minister of Customs.

Now, Sir, a stage has been reached in the career of the right hon. gentleman. He has played fast and loose with the question upon which he secured a party advantage. He stole a chance in the general elections of 1896 to ride into power on the so-called Manitoba school question, and pledges were then made by that right hon. gentleman which must be redeemed, and we are being brought face to face with this question in the acrimonious and bitter manner in which we now have it brought up in this House, by reason of the pledges made by the right hon. gentleman in 1896 and by his followers, throughout the province of Quebec. But the right hon. gentleman has been threatened, though I deny he has been threatened by the Conservative members or supporters. The public will have no difficulty in saying, on the day when this vote is taken, who has been threatening him. It is not the Conservative party who has threatened him, but it is the men in the Liberal ranks who will sit in judgment on the right hon. gentleman and his government for their course on this question. There have been some very striking features in connection with the introduction of this Bill. And here one may call to recollection the fact that on every occasion when this government has seen fit to dragoon its supporters on any question, the same inordinate speed, the same inordinate haste has been resorted to. What was the action of this government on the so-called Yukon Railway Bill, on the Grand Trunk Pacific Bill, and many other matters I might mention? Brought down to parliament, thrown at their supporters; and it is quite true

Mr. BENNETT.