

tiously, can I expect or deserve to retain my seat. And so I have found myself under the obligation of going into this matter, and particularly into the historical aspect of it. I have gone back to the law of 1875, which has been read so often, but which can never be read too often—the first Act that was passed in reference to the Northwest Territories, which provides in section 11, that they shall, when constituted :

Pass all necessary ordinances in respect to education, but it shall therein be always provided that a majority of the ratepayers of any district . . . may establish such schools therein as they may think fit, and make the necessary assessment and collection of rates therefor ; and further that the minority of the ratepayers therein, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, may establish separate schools therein, and that in such latter case the ratepayers establishing such Protestant or Roman Catholic separate schools shall be liable only to assessments of such rates as they may impose upon themselves in respect thereof.

As many another member of this House has done, Mr. Speaker, I have carefully gone over the debate which took place at the time of the passage of this Act of 1875, and I have been convinced from my personal reading of the remarks made at that time, especially in the Senate that the men who enacted that law considered that they were passing a statute which would be a finality, or at least establish a system which it was expected would remain. I find the law of 1875 passed through this House, introduced by the Liberal leader, Mr. Alexander Mackenzie, and seconded by Mr. Edward Blake ; I find that in 1880 that same law was again consolidated and reintroduced, this time by Sir John A. Macdonald ; I find in 1886 it was again passed in this House, so that on three successive occasions that section has come up in this parliament, and on every one of these three occasions it has been passed without comment, division or debate ; and so, Mr. Speaker, it is very evident that both Catholics and Protestants in this House accepted that law when it was passed. It is very evident that the old-time leaders of the Liberal, as well as the Conservative party, accepted that law when it was enacted as a final settlement. Under the law there have been various enactments passed by the local legislature. First we find the local ordinances of 1884, and we learn that from 1884 to 1888 there existed a dual system of schools in the Northwest very similar to that which we now have in Ontario and Quebec. We find that in 1891 that system was greatly modified, and that in 1901 practically the last vestige of clerical control had disappeared. It certainly seems to me that the minority in the Canadian Northwest, in view of the rights and privileges which they have enjoyed, and in view of the curtailment that has already come to them of those privileges, have conceded all that they can reasonably be asked

to concede, and that if a question of this kind is to be settled by mutual concession and compromise, it is time now for the majority to yield a little. Suppose, for example, that the ethnological conditions in the west were reversed ; suppose, for example, that there was to-day a Roman Catholic majority there instead of a Protestant majority. If you look back at the census of 1885, what do you find ? You find that there were 20,295 people in the Northwest Territories, west of the boundaries of Manitoba, between Manitoba and the Rocky mountains, and of that 20,295 9,301 were Roman Catholics, or 46 per cent of the total number. Bear in mind the fact that this was about the time when the first school ordinances were passed in the west. At that time, in the Edmonton district, six-sevenths of the population were Roman Catholics. Thus, when the population was almost equally divided, the separate school system was established without discussion and without resentment of either party. It was as much a protection to the Protestants as it was to the Catholics. There was no prophesying who would go into that country. The French Canadians from Quebec were emigrating in large numbers to the United States. Who could tell that they would not decide to go to the Canadian Northwest in equally large numbers ? The people of Ontario at that time had hardly awakened to the possibilities of the Canadian Northwest. They did not awaken until later, but there was no one who then could prophesy whether the majority in the Northwest would be Protestant or Catholic in the future. It was by mutual consent and agreement, for the protection of either, for the protection of both, for the protection of those who should come after them, that both sides agreed that certain minority privileges should be granted, and these minority privileges we find existing to a very limited extent to-day. Assuming then that this parliament has the power—which, bear in mind, I challenged at the outset, and am not yet convinced that it has—assuming that it has the power to restrict, to a certain extent, the free action of the new provinces in respect of education, and assuming that the government intends to press this legislation, whether legal or illegal, it will therefore become necessary for us to take a vote, but the vote will be little else than an expression of opinion upon the principle involved, and in that light I shall be called upon to cast my vote. I have, therefore, investigated this historical aspect of the subject, and I feel that this parliament has, to a certain extent, by its own Acts, limited its freedom of action at the present time. Were we called upon to deal with this question for a country in which there were no separate schools, for a country which had never passed any separate school ordinances or any separate school legislation, then we