

posed the principle of authorizing separate schools in the Territories, voted against it and gave his reasons?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I am delighted that my hon. friend (Mr. Sproule) has asked me that question. In 1875, when the Bill to which I have referred went through parliament, Mr. Brown who was a member of one branch of this parliament, opposed the introduction of the new clause in that Bill providing for separate schools. He opposed it with all his might. He told the House that he had not changed his mind upon the subject, but he told the House also that if the principle of separate schools was introduced, then, according to the terms of the constitution, it was introduced for all time to come. I am delighted that my hon. friend brought my attention to this, because really the whole subject is contained in the question of my hon. friend. We have to decide this problem upon the very terms of the legislation which was introduced in 1875. Let me give to my hon. friend all the information to which he is entitled, and which I fain would hope will fall upon favourable ground; I will give him the whole history of that matter. Mr. Mackenzie himself introduced the Bill in 1875. The Bill as first introduced made no mention of separate schools; but after he had sat down and when Sir John A. Macdonald had spoken on the subject, Mr. Blake rose and brought this very subject of separate schools to the attention of the House, and he did it with a height and breadth of thought which I hope will command the admiration of my hon. friend. This is what Mr. Blake said:

The task which the ministry had set for itself was the most important it was possible to conceive. To found primary institutions under which we hope to see hundreds of thousands, and the more sanguine among us think millions of men and families settled and flourishing, was one of the noblest undertakings that could be entered upon by any legislative body, and it was no small indication of the power and true position of this Dominion that parliament should be engaged to-day in that important task. He agreed with the hon. member for Kingston that the task was one that required time, consideration and deliberation, and they must take care that no false steps were made in such work. He did not agree with that right hon. gentleman that the government ought to repeal his errors. The right hon. gentleman had tried the institutions for the Northwest Territories which he now asked the House to frame, and for the same reason as he had given to-day—that it would be better for the Dominion government to keep matters in their own hands and decide what was best for the future. He (Mr. Blake) believed that it was essential to our obtaining a large immigration to the Northwest that we should tell the people beforehand what those rights were to be in the country in which we invited them to settle. It was interesting to the people to know that at the very earliest moment there was a sufficient

aggregate of population within a reasonable distance, that aggregation would have a voice in the self-government of the territories, and he believed the Dominion government was wise, (although the measure might be brought down very late this session and it might be found impossible to give it due consideration) in determining in advance of settlement what the character of the institutions of the country should be in which we invite people to settle.

He regarded it as essential under the circumstances of the country, and in view of the deliberation during the last few days that a general principle should be laid down in the Bill with respect to public instruction. He did believe that we ought not to introduce into that territory the heart burnings and difficulties with which certain other portions of this Dominion and other countries had been afflicted. It seemed to him, having regard to the fact that, as far as we could expect at present, the general character of that population would be somewhat analogous to the population of Ontario, that there should be some provision in the constitution by which they should have conferred upon them the same rights and privileges in regard to religious instruction as those possessed by the people of the province of Ontario. The principles of local self-government and the settling of the question of public instruction, it seemed to him, ought to be the cardinal principles of the measure.

Now let me call renewed attention to these words of Mr. Blake: 'I regard it as essential under the circumstances of the country, and in view of the deliberation of the last few days.' What were the deliberations of those last few days in the House of Commons to which Mr. Blake alluded? Why, Sir, it was a resolution on that very subject of separate schools, separate schools in the province of New Brunswick, where at that time, and by the constitution, the principle of separate schools was not adopted; the minority was asking for separate schools, and came to this House for relief, but the House would not grant the relief because they would not invade the constitution. Mr. Blake said that instead of having such a state of things in the Northwest Territories it would be better to give to the people the religious instruction that all classes might want. Now what was Mr. Mackenzie's answer to this?

As to the subject of public instruction, it did not in the first place attract his attention, but when he came to the subject of local taxation he was reminded of it. Not having had time before to insert a clause on the subject, he proposed to do so when the Bill was in committee. The clause provided that the Lieutenant Governor by and with the consent of his council or assembly, as the case might be, should pass all necessary ordinances in respect of education, but it would be specially provided that the majority of the ratepayers might establish such schools and impose such necessary assessment as they might think fit; and that the minority of the ratepayers, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, might establish separate schools; and such ratepayers would be liable only to such educational assessments as they might impose upon themselves. This he