

had been settled and would not be considered again by the government and the Hon. Mr. Miller added :

He thanked the government again for their determination to adhere to the law of last session, which secured freedom of education forever to the great Territories of the Northwest. When the Act will have been proclaimed, which he supposed would shortly be done, it can never be repealed, and the privileges it guarantees will then become the birthright of the generations that are to people that great and promising country, so long, at least, as British institutions and British justice shall prevail there.

In addition to which, the Hon. Mr. Scott said :

The government were guided by experience in settling the separate school question in the Northwest and setting it at rest at once and for ever.

So, we have the declaration from leading members of both parties in 1875 and 1876 that, in establishing separate schools in the Northwest Territories in 1875 they meant first, to establish them for ever, and, second, to establish in the Northwest the same system of separate schools as existed in Quebec and Ontario. And when hon. gentlemen opposite quote Sir John Thompson against that contention, I have to remind them that Sir John Thompson, although on the legal point of whether or not the settlement of this question in 1875 was binding on parliament, differed with Mr. Dalton McCarthy, and stated positively that the parliament of Canada, when the time came to give provincial institutions to the Northwest be free to do whatever it liked, yet, at the same time he said parliament would have to consider the pledges given in 1875 on that question. The pledges given in 1875 were pledges which this government at first considered that they should keep, but which it is proposed by that amendment to ignore. They provided for the same system of schools in the Northwest as was established in Quebec and Ontario. There cannot be two opinions about that.

Mr. SPROULE. I think the hon. gentleman has scarcely given a correct interpretation of what Sir John Thompson said. Here are Sir John Thompson's own words :

We claim therefore that the constitutional system which was established with regard to schools and with regard to language in 1875 ought to be maintained for the same reasons as those which dictated its creation, and that this condition of affairs should last, at least, while the affairs of the Territories are under control of this parliament. What the constitution of the future provinces should be, in view of the pledges which have been referred to, or in view of any other set of circumstances, will be for parliament to decide when it decides to create those provinces.

That is entirely different from the interpretation given by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Bourassa).

Mr. BOURASSA.

Not at all. I say distinctly that this parliament is free. I do not claim some small legal technicality, but a broad moral obligation, which this parliament has taken upon itself. I admit that we are free to ignore that obligation, we are free to be untrue to our pledges. I admit that Sir John Thompson never attempted to say that this parliament would not be free. But, if we have any desire to maintain the honour of parliament, if, in the words of the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), we want to build up a nation, we cannot do it by tying ourselves up to legal forms ; we can only do it by being true to our moral obligations. And this parliament will not be doing good work for the building up of this country and the maintenance of British justice and British institutions in Canada if it does not live up to its moral as well as its legal obligations.

Mr. SPROULE. If I am not interrupting the hon. gentleman (Mr. Bourassa) too much I would like to ask him a question : If we have a constitution which provides for the rights of all the provinces, and if education is one of those rights, what guarantee would there be of the rights of the provinces in the future if an Act such as that passed by this parliament in 1875 should control them for all time in the matter of education ?

Mr. BOURASSA. I am not going to enter into a discussion of these small points. I have made the point that, so far as the Northwest is concerned, this parliament was the only body that could legislate for it up to the present time. And this body established, in the very words of the legislators of 1875, for ever, a system based on that in Ontario and Quebec. And, by adopting the amendment proposed by the Prime Minister we are breaking that engagement. That is my position. The law of 1875 was not a law of narrow scope which would have prevented the government of the Northwest, any more than the original proposition of the Minister of Justice, if adhered to, would have prevented the legislatures of the new provinces, from dealing with educational matters just as we may deal with them in Ontario and Quebec. I would ask any hon. member on either side of the House, why should the people of the Northwest Territories be in a different position from those of Ontario and Quebec ? Are we in Ontario and Quebec interfered with, is our liberty curtailed, because there is in our constitution some restriction as to our power of encroaching upon the rights of the minority ? And, if it was found best to prevent the majority in Ontario and in Quebec from dealing improperly with the minority, why should not the majority in the Northwest Territories be checked in the same way, should they feel inclined to deal less fairly with the minority than the minorities in Ontario and Quebec are dealt with ?