

at that time and the exertions which he then put forth met with their fitting reward in the tender to him of the position which he now holds. This hon. gentleman was acting as the ally and, I suppose, under the direction of the right hon. gentleman in the east as was the hon. member for Brandon in the west of Canada. He pronounced himself in no equivocal terms upon this question. It was thought by his friends in Nova Scotia that the speech which he delivered at Windsor in the county of Hants on the 6th of March, I think it was, 1896, was the ablest deliverance made in that province in support of the policy of the Liberal party at that time, and was perhaps the best exposition of their policy that had been made by any man in Canada up to that time. I will quote a few words not for the purpose of criticising them, not for the purpose of assenting to them, but simply to support my position that my hon. friend had very pronounced views to the knowledge of the Prime Minister on this question which makes it all the more strange that the provisions of this Bill should have been withheld from him, if, as a matter of fact, they were so withheld. Said the hon. gentleman on that occasion to which I have referred :

Why should we not believe that Manitoba will be reasonable in this matter? The Manitobans are not African savages.

I will venture the statement that the true interests of the Roman Catholic citizens of Manitoba will be better advanced by the policy of conciliation than by the policy of coercion. This Remedial Bill which the government are trying to enforce upon an unwilling parliament, even if it should pass, cannot settle the question. It would be an attack on provincial rights. . . . If Roman Catholics are ever to obtain a solution of this question which is worth having they must obtain it through the good will of the majority of the people of the province to which they belong.

Further on in the same speech he said :

I ask the people of Hants county and the people of Nova Scotia to stand by the principle of free schools in the case of Manitoba just as they would stand by it in their own province. . . . We in Nova Scotia know the value of a system of free public schools. We have shown in the past that while we may differ on many questions we are practically a unit in support of that system. . . . If the Dominion authorities should attempt to interfere with our school system, if they should attempt to impose upon this province a system which they are trying to force upon Manitoba, we would expect to have the sympathy of the friends of free schools elsewhere, and we would expect the people of the western provinces to give us their sympathy and support in such a condition. Let us to-day give them our hearty sympathy and support in the struggle until we find that they are not amenable to reason.

Further on after giving credit to Sir Charles Tupper for establishing public schools in Nova Scotia, he continues :

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What can we say of the position of that gentleman to-day who instead of standing up as the champion of a free school system and resisting those who attack it scrambles into parliament through the unfair influence of the Roman Catholic pupils of the county of Cape Breton, and is now devoting the evening of his life to the work of destroying the free school system of Manitoba and forcing upon that province a system which he would not dare to attempt to force upon the province of Nova Scotia.

Further on in a letter to the 'Casket' newspaper published in Antigonish he said :

The uproar is upon us, already the blaze of religious strife has been kindled and is being vigorously fanned every day by the efforts to coerce the province of Manitoba.

In the speech at Windsor to which I have just now referred he used this further language :

For twenty years the Roman Catholic minority thus had the privilege of a separate school system. The result of that system proved exceedingly unsatisfactory to the people of Manitoba. . . . Ample evidence has been adduced to prove that the separate schools were not efficient schools.

Then, one more passage from his speech which is of some importance at the present juncture as embodying his views :

I believe that the people of Manitoba if let alone will settle this question for themselves. Why should we not believe this? We know from our own experience in the maritime provinces that it has been found possible to maintain a free school system and to administer it so as to make it acceptable to the people of every class and creed. We hear no complaint of the Nova Scotia School Law. The Manitoba school system is substantially the same as Nova Scotia.

My object in quoting this language of the Minister of Finance is not to criticise or to discuss it; it is simply to show that when the right hon. gentleman accepted the aid and support of the Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Fielding) and when he invited him to enter his cabinet, he knew that the hon. gentleman had used that language, and had made these speeches in Nova Scotia. Thus, the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) had full knowledge of the views which the Minister of Finance entertained in regard to certain provisions similar to those in the Bill now before parliament.

I wish to once more call the attention of the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) to the fact that upon the eve of the return to Ottawa of the ex-Minister of the Interior (Hon. Clifford Sifton) and of the Minister of Finance (Hon. W. S. Fielding) he has seen fit to introduce to parliament a Bill in such manner that parliament had every reason to believe, was bound to believe, and indeed every one of us did believe, that the provisions of that Bill had received the assent of every member of the administration. Under the circumstances, that was undoubtedly a grave departure from constitutional usage. I do not