

House and the government favour, the matter becomes a very serious one. That would be a very serious attitude to assume towards that province, whose school system was established after the most careful consideration, and whose right to establish that school system has been vindicated in the highest courts, not only of Canada but of the British empire. But if that present school system exists in Manitoba, who is responsible? I submit that the sole responsibility rests with hon. gentlemen opposite, because in the year 1896 they refused to the Manitoba minority in that province the privilege for which they were then asking. What was the course pursued by hon. gentlemen opposite in that connection? I had the honour of being then, as I am now, a supporter of the Conservative party, but I was not enthusiastic with regard to the position taken on the Manitoba school question by the Hon. Sir Charles Tupper who then led the Conservative party. I never lifted up my voice on behalf of that policy. Not a word did I speak during the election of that year in favour of it. I had for a long series of years paid very close attention to the career of the hon. gentleman who at that time was leading the Conservative party, and I consider that in the annals of Canadian public men the name of Sir Charles Tupper will be handed down to posterity as one of the most distinguished statesmen this country has produced. But on that occasion I was not one of those who were enthusiastic with regard to Sir Charles Tupper's policy on the Manitoba school question. I am glad now to be able to say that I was not enthusiastic with regard to that policy and did not support it, and therefore my course at present is clear and straightforward. The same convictions which I had then animate me still. I have not found it necessary, in the course of my public career, to vary my attitude on this question. If I have attained in my neighbourhood any reputation of any description in public matters, it is because, in dealing with public questions I have always treated them as questions upon which I had formed convictions and upon which I never hesitated to give expression to those convictions. Whether with regard to separate schools or the tariff or the railway policy of this country or any other question, I do not believe that I can be accused by any hon. gentleman opposite with ever having hesitated to speak my beliefs; and should it ever become necessary for me to part with my convictions, I trust I shall be then also out of public life, for I have no desire to remain in public life if I cannot do so without sacrificing what I believe to be just and right and in the best interests of the country.

We have been invited to set up in business two new provinces. The right hon. gentleman who leads the government has given us an invitation to the christening, but I am sorry to say an unseemly wrangle

Mr. COCKSHUTT.

has arisen as to who shall be the godfather of the twins. This certainly is a matter which should have been settled before this House and country were invited to attend the ceremony. We have been thrown into a debate the like of which perhaps has never occurred in this House before on more than one or two occasions. I was hoping that such a discussion would never occur in this House in my time, but as it has been provoked by hon. gentlemen opposite, we must not be afraid to face the difficulty and to state our convictions and beliefs. Hon. gentlemen opposite have accused this side of the House with being bigoted and partisan and unwilling to listen to the prayer of the minority. But I think the cause of this debate is to be found in the speech of the right hon. gentleman in introducing the Bill. If you will refer to that speech, you will see the reason why we are debating this question at such great length and dealing with a matter, concerning which opinions are so conflicting and passions cannot fail to be aroused. The right hon. gentleman, in that speech, dwelt at great length upon the school clauses of the Bill before us. That in fact was the principal item that he dealt with. Into that feature of the measure he threw the whole force of his advocacy; and I must say that from his standpoint he made a very able argument and one that no doubt carried conviction to the minds of many of his followers. In order that I may not be charged with having misrepresented the right hon. gentleman, may I be permitted to read the words he used, which will be found on page 1444 of 'Hansard':

Before I proceed, let me make a few observations to show the origin and object of all this legislation concerning separate schools. You find in this legislation the terms constantly recurring of Protestant or Catholic I need not say that the Christian religion is not only a religion founded on moral laws, prescribing moral duties, but it is also a religion of dogmas. Dogmas from the earliest times have occupied just as strong and commanding a position in the faith of all Christians as morals themselves. The reformation created a cleavage between Christians. The old section remained Roman Catholics; the new called themselves Protestants. Between the Roman Catholics and Protestants there is a deep divergence in dogmas. Between the various Protestant denominations there are but small differences in dogmas; the differences are more matters of discipline than of dogma. Therefore the old legislature of Canada, finding a population of Catholics and different denominations of Protestants all mixed together, finding only one cause of cleavage between them in Christian faith, that is dogmas, allowed religious teaching to be had in the schools of our country, so that every man could give to his own child the religious tenets which he held sometimes dearer than life. That is the whole meaning of separate schools.

In that language of the right hon. gentleman we have a special plea for the teaching