

make such laws? Why should we interfere in any way with the constitutional rights of the provinces in order to saddle them for all time with the dictum of this parliament which is contained in clause 16 as amended? We know that the conditions of these provinces must very greatly change, that from the nature of the immigration which will flow steadily into them, which will make that era of prosperity which we all hope for, there must necessarily be very greatly changed conditions, and to those changed conditions it is necessary that a policy of education, as of everything else, should be fitted. From time to time the legislatures of the provinces newly formed might desire to alter in some respects their laws. I do not suppose for one instant that any one will say that the school ordinances of the Northwest Territories, which are to be fixed as the laws of these provinces for all time, are the very acme of perfection of legislation in regard to education. I do not suppose that any hon. gentleman who represents the Northwest Territories will say, even with regard to the policy of educational finance, that it would not be possible to improve those ordinances.

We say to the Northwest by clause 16: You have passed a law, the ordinances chapters 23, 30 and 31, and we decree that you shall never change that law, that it shall be the law and the policy of your educational system for all time and you will have no power as a legislature ever to change that system. These ordinances are, for the purposes of education, like the laws of the Medes and Persians which cannot be changed. This is a free people. If autonomy is given to this people because the time has come when it shall be trusted with self-government, if this people is to be trusted to rule a copybook, why not trust it to have the rights that pertain to provinces and to make laws from time to time for the people that come to that country. It is an extraordinary proposition, that this people, which is competent and progressive enough and important enough to carry on its legislation in every other branch should be judged by this parliament incapable of managing its own affairs in this respect. It is contrary to the British constitution, moulded for this Canada of ours, that we should withhold from them the power to change their educational system as the necessities of the case require. The Prime Minister has been asked across the floor of this House why he did not trust the people upon this measure, why not trust the people with regard to the educational policy, why not obtain a dictum from the people upon so important a subject. He has not obtained a dictum from the people, he has no dictum from the people of the Northwest to-day for the legislation with regard to education which it is proposed to foist and cement upon these new provinces and in the absence of such a dictum I would say that

the coercion and that the usurpation of provincial rights is doubly aggravated because the people are not only shackled by the legislation with regard to their educational policy, but they have no opportunity of saying before the shackles are put on them whether they shall have this or that for their educational policy. It is a form of coercion against which the right hon. gentleman himself raised his voice long and earnestly, it is a position which he fought strongly in 1896. At that period when, as he said, the Conservative party under the leadership of Sir Charles Tupper were endeavouring to coerce the people of Manitoba under circumstances very similar to the facts now before us, the right hon. gentleman's utterances were very vigorous. He attacked the position under which the government of that day would impress and imprint the domination of this parliament with regard to education on the autonomy of the Northwest. He calls it the 'constitutional right,' and in introducing this Bill he speaks of the 'rock of the constitution.' Hon. gentlemen on the same side of the House have differed with him with regard to the question of the constitution and the discussion upon the constitutional aspects of the question has been so diversified that I fancy the lay members of the House are very weary indeed of the subject and desire to get at the true issue. Sir, the true issue with regard to the educational sections of this Bill is the issue of provincial rights; it is the question whether we shall take away from a province that which the province by right ought to possess.

The right hon. gentleman discoursed at length upon the position with regard to provincial rights in Manitoba in 1896, at the time the Remedial Bill was under discussion. The policy of non-interference with local legislation was the great text of his speeches, and if there was any greater emphasis that he could have placed upon the doctrine of provincial rights, it was that, under no circumstances, would the power of the provinces be interfered with by the federal parliament. At page 2742 of the 'Hansard' of 1896, the right hon. gentleman said:

In view of these facts, what is the lesson to be adduced from this teaching of our history? The lesson we should deduce is that if it was a wise provision to establish this power in the constitution for the supervision of the local legislatures, perhaps it was dictated by unmixed wisdom. For, Sir, experience has taught us that this remedy of interference with local legislation has never been applied and probably never can be applied without friction, disturbance and discontent; that you cannot apply that remedy without causing as much dissatisfaction as satisfaction.

And again:

The hon. gentleman told us a moment ago that the government is bound to act mechanically in this matter. Now, I ask parliament this question: Are we, upon the complaint of