

Sifton) is not the only gentleman who took strong ground against interference in provincial matters of this character and in favour of a national as against a separate school system. There is our friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) who is reported in the Halifax 'Chronicle' in March 6, 1896, as speaking at Windsor in the following words—

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Is that the present Minister of Finance?

Mr. W. J. ROCHE. The present Minister of Finance, then premier of Nova Scotia.

In Manitoba they have prescribed exercises which contain nothing that ought to be objectionable to any body of Christians, and if there are, means can no doubt be found to remove the cause of complaint without Dominion interference. Why should we not believe that Manitoba will be reasonable in this matter? The Manitobans are not African savages.

Why cannot we trust the people in the new provinces of the west? Neither are they African savages. They are dominated by the same spirit of fairness and justice as the people of Manitoba. He goes on:

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 that 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—

On what?

—an attack on provincial rights. . . . If the 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.

And if the hon. gentleman were to speak his conscientious sentiments he would state equally to-day that the people of the west, the Roman Catholic citizens of the new provinces in the west, will have a better chance to secure their rights and all their privileges through the good will of the majority of those who will people that part of the Dominion. But the hon. gentleman goes on further:

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 on this province the system which they are trying to force on 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

Mr. W. J. ROCHE.

us to-day give them our hearty support in the struggle until we find that they are not amenable to reason.

Then he goes on to give credit to Sir Charles Tupper for the Nova Scotia school law and he says:

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, scrambled into parliament—

In what manner? Why here is another gentleman testifying to clerical influence which the hon. gentlemen opposite say is all a myth. According to the present Minister of Finance Sir Charles Tupper was scrambling into parliament

—through the unfair influence of the Roman Catholic pulpits 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.

And yet the hon. gentleman is to-day voting,—I think against his own conscience—to impose upon the people of the western provinces a system of schools that may turn out equally objectionable in those new provinces in the future.

In a letter addressed to the 'Casket' on March the 14th, 1896 the same hon. gentleman states:

Only as a last resort and when every other possible method of settlement has failed can there be any justification for federal interference in the educational affairs of any province in the Dominion.

Again in a letter to the same paper dated April 4th, 1896, he says:

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 Manitoba.

And now they are doing the same thing themselves only they are sugar-coating that word 'coercion' which was so bitter to their taste in 1896.

Again on March 6, speaking at Windsor he stated:

I believe that the people of Manitoba if left 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 practically the same as the Nova Scotia.

And yet the hon. gentleman told us the other day that to-day if not by law by practice they are practically in the enjoyment of separate schools in Halifax, and in some parts of Nova Scotia, to a greater ex-