

I wish now to point out the financial assistance that is to be given to these two new provinces. This, briefly, is the substance of some clauses in the Bill.

Now, Sir, when the right hon. gentleman introduced this Bill he expressed some surprise at the references made by newspapers and by some distinguished gentlemen in this country. Of course the people of Canada everywhere were very much interested in the introduction of these Bills. This question had been up for consideration in this parliament. Indeed, the leader of the opposition had moved a resolution in the session of 1903 and again in 1904 in favour of absolute provincial autonomy being given to these Territories, unrestricted right to deal with every thing of a provincial character. That was the policy of the opposition in this House in the sessions of 1903 and 1904. May I be permitted to tell the right hon. gentleman what was the chief reason for the adverse newspaper comment and criticism which he has read from distinguished men in this country? It is because they had known the stand the right hon. gentleman had taken in 1896 on this educational or religious question. The people did not distrust the right hon. gentleman, they never thought for a moment that he would go back on his record of 1896, and venture to introduce into this House certain clauses in the Autonomy Bills which would stir up religious strife in this country. Therefore, he had at his back the whole Canadian people; he had not only the confidence of the Liberal party, but the confidence of a great number of Liberal-Conservatives in this country, many of whom voted for him in 1896 on this very question. So, Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman would not have far to go to find a reason why the newspapers and leading gentlemen who had supported him in 1896 were very much surprised to find that he had now changed his policy in regard to provincial rights. Some hon. gentlemen who have spoken from the other side of the House ventured to say that those who have criticised this Bill are not well acquainted with the question. Well, that may be the case as to some of the criticisms, but I do not think the right hon. gentleman or any member of his government would say this applies to all the criticisms that have been offered to the educational clauses in these Bills. I have here a protest from the Presbyterian body. I am glad to see my hon. friend the Minister of Customs, who as I am informed is a distinguished member of that denomination, in his seat. I will read this protest from the Presbytery of Guelph:

Another protest against the Educational Provisions of the Autonomy Bill.

A meeting of the Guelph Presbytery was held in Melville church, Fergus, to-day. The following resolution was moved by Major Hood, Guelph, seconded by Rev. Mr. Horne, Elora: The Presbytery of Guelph, representing a large

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portion of the counties of Waterloo, Wellington and Halton, hereby presents its strong protest to the parliament of Canada against the educational clauses of the Provincial Autonomy Bills now before the House for consideration. The presbytery regrets that any attempt is being made to debar a free people from the exercise of their constitutional prerogative, the right to decide for themselves the character of their school system. It is the conviction of the presbytery that should the proposed legislation become law it would involve the new provinces in perpetual racial and sectarian discord, which would be a most serious obstacle to the future prosperity and happiness of the people. Believing that the placing of such an Act on the statute book would be a misuse of the powers of the federal government, members of the presbytery pledge themselves to do all in their power to oppose and prevent such proposed invasion of provincial rights, and most respectfully urge the government and both Houses to grant to the two new provinces complete control over their educational system.

I have here a statement by a gentleman who stands at the head of the Presbyterian Church in the province of Ontario, and who spoke at a mass meeting in Toronto, in Massey Hall, on March 20. I refer to Rev. Dr. Milligan, moderator of the Presbyterian Church, who declares:

That, believing in a commonwealth with equal rights for all and favours for none, and believing that a great crisis had arisen in the national history, demanding united and patriotic action by every citizen, irrespective of creed or politics.

The premier's policy in the present issue, he continued, had come to him like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. It was a direct controversion of the attitude taken in 1896.

Wherever one party had privileges at the expense of another there could never be peace. Let there be no restrictions imposed on the new west, but one common brotherhood and one common school system. He noted that the federal separate school legislation in regard to Ontario and Quebec was in the nature of an exception, and he urged the fallacy of the argument which sought to make this exceptional case apply to all the provinces.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that statement voices the views of all the Presbyterians in Canada—or, to be more correct, of nearly all the Presbyterians in Canada, who believe that the government are now invading provincial rights in attempting to fasten upon the new provinces a dual system of education.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No, no.

Mr. BLAIN. Who says 'no, no'? I say that the Presbyterian body in Canada and the leading Presbyterians who are as well versed as the member who calls out 'no, no,' have sent in their protest with these facts before me. I have the right to say that the Presbyterian body of this country are almost a unit in opposition to the government forcing upon the people of the west this educational clause. Here is a protest from the Church of England.