

been given, but before they left Ottawa, and some time between the 20th and the 23rd of February, they received a letter from His Excellency, Monseigneur Sbarretti. I make no criticism upon His Excellency in extending to them that invitation; I make no criticism upon them for courteously accepting that invitation. Let us consider, however, how far the situation had developed up to that time. Legislation in regard to the schools in the Northwest was about being brought down; it even then had just been brought down by the administration—or at least by a portion of the administration, because two members of the administration had not been consulted. I will correct myself and say that legislation had been brought down by the Prime Minister in the name of the whole administration, but with the authority of only a part of the administration. It is true that we had very direct avowals from the Minister of Agriculture and from the Postmaster General yesterday, that they were thoroughly familiar with the terms of the legislation as originally brought down and that they thoroughly approved of it as originally brought down. I am making no criticism so far as they are concerned, because the Prime Minister certainly had their approval and the approval of the Minister of Customs, but he had not the approval of the Minister of Finance nor of the Minister of the Interior.

I do not know to what extent any consultations had been had with His Excellency in regard to the terms of this legislation. The statement has been made in the public press—I called my right hon. friend's attention to it yesterday, I invited him to make some explanation with regard to it—and the statement has been made across the floor of the House, that His Excellency had been consulted with regard to the terms of this legislation. I am not at present making any criticism about that; I am only mentioning it to lead up to what follows, because, educational matters in the Northwest Territories were considered, if in these consultations it is a little difficult to believe that the schools of Manitoba were absolutely ignored in these discussions and that the boundaries of Manitoba were never mentioned. What follows? The interview took place. I made no comment yesterday with regard to that, because I thought it was not advisable for me to do so, as we had not yet the version of His Excellency before us, and I thought we were entitled to have his version of what took place before we should make much comment upon this particular incident. Last night, His Excellency, I believe, gave out an interview which has been published in the newspapers of today, and I will follow the example of my right hon. friend yesterday, by placing the whole of that interview on 'Hansard,' in order that we may have the full benefit of the explanation that has been given.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

Monseigneur Sbarretti last night handed out for publication the following statement:

I think it my duty to declare that the press report of a conference with the Manitoba delegates is not altogether exact and that it is given in such a way as to make a false impression on the minds of the people.

These are the facts:

Taking occasion of the presence in Ottawa of the Hon. Mr. Campbell, the attorney-general of Manitoba, whom I had met in a friendly way more than a year ago, I invited him to come to see me. I never met Hon. Mr. Rogers, nor did I have any communication with him. On the evening before his departure for the west, February 23rd, Mr. Campbell came. I asked him if something could not be done to improve the condition of the Catholics of his province with respect to education. I pointed out that in the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon, for instance, the Catholics were paying double taxes. I urged my request on the ground of fairness and justice and referring to his mission to Ottawa I remarked that from the point of view of the Manitoba government some action on these lines would be politically expedient and tend to facilitate the accomplishment of his object, inasmuch as Catholics in any territory which might be annexed to Manitoba would naturally object to losing the right they had to separate schools and to be subjected to the educational conditions which existed in Manitoba. Mr. Campbell then asked me what would be my desire in this respect. I then gave him the memorandum which has already appeared in the press.

This is the sum and substance of my interview with Mr. Campbell. The federal government had absolutely no knowledge of it. It was a private conversation and simply intended to express a suggestion and a desire that the condition of the Catholics in the respect I have mentioned would be improved. Any other assumption or interpretation is altogether unfounded. I think my right of speaking to Mr. Campbell in a private way and on my own responsibility cannot be disputed.

I notice that my hon. friends opposite cheer very much the statement of His Excellency that 'Catholics in any territory which might be annexed to Manitoba would naturally object to losing the right they had to separate schools, and to be subjected to the educational conditions which existed in Manitoba.' That is what they cheer, as I understand. I am amazed at these hon. gentlemen. The other day we had the ex-Minister of the Interior rise in his place and publicly thank the right hon. Prime Minister, without whose aid, he said, the Catholics of Manitoba could not have been deprived of those rights—publicly thanked the right hon. gentleman for having come to the aid of the majority in Manitoba and prevented the Conservative government from restoring to the minority those rights of which they had been deprived. The right hon. gentleman has declared this to be a happy solution of a difficult situation; but hon. gentlemen opposite cheer the utterance which I have just quoted. Their attitude is a little incomprehensible to myself, and I think it must be incomprehensible