

write, a gentleman who represented a constituency almost exclusively French and Roman Catholic stood up in the legislature and said that if the Bill became law, in his constituency persons could not be found who could qualify for the office of reeve or councillor.

A pretty sweeping assertion, that if a Bill compelling municipal councillors to be able to read and write were to pass the legislature there would not be sufficient men in his district who could qualify for office. Mr. Sifton continued :

Under this system public money went direct to the clergy of the Roman Catholic church. They did practically what they liked with it, conducted their schools or not as they saw fit, with the result that the people grew up in absolute illiteracy. Money was used for the purposes of the church and not for education. He lauded the Public School Act, and supported one system of schools where there should be no distinction between one man and another, when the law should know no man's religion but give each and every one the same privilege.

And still the hon. member (Mr. Sifton) stated the other day in this House, that he would give his approbation to this Bill though it was opposed to his conscientious convictions and his past record. Now he is going to inflict separate schools on the people of the new western provinces which will cause this division between the child of one man and the child of another, and will not give each and every one the same privilege. The report of Mr. Sifton's remarks continues :

He said that if the Roman Catholic people were left alone, if the priests of Quebec would leave them alone, inside of three or four years they would accept the public school system.

Does the ex-Minister of the Interior not think that the same might occur in the new provinces of the west, and that if these people are left alone they would be just as apt to accept the public school system there as in the province of Manitoba ? Apparently, the ex-minister thinks that not only the priests of Manitoba but the priests of Quebec interfere in educational matters outside their own provinces.

He accused the Conservative government, in passing the remedial order, of buying the votes of the province of Quebec.

What a very high estimate the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sifton) had of the people of Quebec. There was a Conservative government doing what they thought they were obliged to do by the order of the highest court in the realm, and this hon. gentleman (Mr. Sifton) states, that the Conservative government in doing what it believed to be its duty were simply buying up the votes of the people of Quebec. Mr. Sifton further says :

The people of the Red River when they came into confederation never asked for separate schools ; never wanted them, and that the clause in the Bill sent to Ottawa demanding them was fraudulently put there by the clergy of the Roman Catholic church.

Evidently the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sifton) has no great love for the clergy of the Roman Catholic church, nor has he that high opinion of the clerical school system that the hon. member for Labelle has. Dr. Montague was the candidate in Haldimand when this speech was made, and the report states :

Mr. Sifton asked why Dr. Montague took such an interest in this matter ? It is because the Roman Catholic clergy are a well organized body and because they have a political influence in Canada which is not to be sneezed at.

Language more forcible than polite I admit, but still when hon. gentlemen opposite claim that the clergy of Quebec never had any influence, never tried to exercise that influence in political matters, the ex-Minister of the Interior states that they are a well-organized body and that they have a political influence in Canada that is not to be sneezed at. He goes on still further :

During the last hundred years you will find that wherever a constitutional Act was prepared of an organizing character, you will find that something is drawn which indicates the hand of the clergy is there. The language may be the language of the Canadian politician, but in every case the voice is the voice of the church.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have before us today a measure of an organizing character, creating two new provinces out of these vast territories in western Canada. Is it to be believed that this is the sole exception that has taken place in 100 years in which the clergy's hand has not been seen ? I wonder if the Minister of the Interior were he to mentally recall those utterances of his in 1895 when he said that during the last 100 years there has not been a single instance where anything of an organizing character has taken place that the hand of the clergy has not been seen would claim, if he were to speak according to his honest convictions that the same thing is not occurring at the present day. He went on :

If the people of Canada approve of the Act of the government it means that the Roman Catholic church of the province of Quebec can practically get anything they like from the government of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would commend these utterances to the right hon. gentleman who leads this House (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and if he can find in them that spirit of tolerance and Christian charity of which he spoke, if he can find in them that broad-mindedness that soaring to the very pinnacle of statesmanship, that breadth of mind and desire to discuss questions of this character with the object of promoting peace and harmony of which he spoke, then I will attribute to him a great deal more perception than I possess, but I must confess that I believe he himself will be in need of that pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night to show him the way and give him the light. The ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr.