

system; you must now give us a continuation of it.

Mr. McCarthy, of course, was desirous that the system should be changed, but in the meantime he did not shrink from the responsibility of saying that if the parliament of Canada desired to change it, it must act quickly, and not wait until the time arrived for the creation of the provinces. I find the words of Mr. McCarthy in 'Hansard' of 1894, page 6085:

Now we insist by the clause of the Act of 1875 which has been included in the various consolidations of the legislative powers of the Northwest Territories which have been made from time to time, that they shall have separate schools; and if we continue insisting that that system shall prevail up to the time we create provinces in the Northwest, then the application of this clause of the first subsection of section 93 of the British North America Act to which I have referred, rivets for all time upon the new provinces the system of separate schools. Create a province there now, enact the usual clauses of the British North America Act, and the result will be that in the new province those who have enjoyed what is spoken of as a right or privilege with respect to denominational schools, would be able to say: The constitution given to this province by the Dominion parliament does not permit any interference with any right or privilege which we enjoyed prior to the time of the creation of this province. That I think is a most important consideration.

Mr. McCarthy, it will be observed, as an opponent of the system of separate schools, took the ground that if the parliament of Canada wished to destroy that system it must not wait until it undertook to create a province. His argument is that if you leave these Northwest people in possession of the separate school system, if you go on year after year permitting it, encouraging it; if you allow them to pass ordinances in accordance with it, if you have these ordinances sent to Ottawa year after year and you approve of them and allow them to go into operation, then you are confirming the system of separate schools to those provinces; and when the moment shall arrive that these lands shall pass from the status of territories into the larger status of provinces, it will then be too late for you to come in and say; we will deprive you of this system of separate schools. Mr. McCarthy and Sir John Thompson had some little discussion, and he (Mr. McCarthy) again emphasized his views on that subject.

I am very glad the right hon gentleman—

Referring to Sir John Thompson.

—has explained it in that way, and perhaps I was wrong in my understanding of his remarks. Of course it is an important declaration from the First Minister.

That was the declaration which Sir John Thompson made, and which was quoted by the leader of the opposition to-day, in which he said that the parliament of Canada would

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be free to give to the provinces of the Northwest such a constitution as it might see fit. Mr. McCarthy was answering that declaration, and he went on to add:

Now the House will have to use its own judgment on this question. What I say is this: That if this question of separate schools is to remain in its present position until we grant provincial autonomy to any portion of the Northwest, it will be practically impossible, unless there is an enormous change in public opinion, to deny them what every other province that has joined the confederation has been entitled to, what Manitoba was entitled to, and what I submit under the circumstances every province would be entitled to. Now, let me draw attention to the constitution conferred upon Manitoba in that regard. I have not got it under my hand, but it will be found on consulting it that when we conferred autonomy upon the province of Manitoba, we did it by reference to the British North America Act. What we declared was that where not otherwise provided for in the Act, all the provisions of the British North America Act should apply to the province of Manitoba, and I think the very same words were contained in the resolutions which were passed at the time British Columbia and the province of Prince Edward Island came into the union. So that we have got that precedent before us: that was the promise upon which we admitted Manitoba, and looking at the character of the legislation, I do not think that there can be any doubt that the same rule must apply when we come to admit the provinces to be created out of the Northwest Territories.

My hon. friend, in quoting to-day from Sir John Thompson, almost gave me the impression—he will probably say that he certainly did not so intend—that Sir John Thompson had expressed no opinion favourable to the continuance of separate schools in the Northwest Territories. Sir John Thompson, in answer to Mr. McCarthy, did state that the parliament of Canada could give to the Northwest Territories such a constitution as it might see fit; but in doing so Sir John Thompson used words which unmistakably show that in his mind that moral obligation would exist. Sir John Thompson said:

What the constitution of the future provinces shall be, in view of the pledges which have been referred to, or in view of any other set of circumstances, will be for parliament to decide when it decides to create those provinces.

Sir John Thompson recognized as a lawyer the power of the parliament of Canada to give to the new provinces such constitution as parliament might see fit, but in doing so he carefully inserted the words:

What the constitution of the future provinces shall be in view of the pledges which have been referred to.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Could the hon. gentleman state what were the pledges he referred to?