

same school system as the system that was abolished by the ordinance of the Northwest Territories in 1892. The two were abolished almost at the same time; but I am bound to say that our friends in the Northwest Territories succeeded in getting their reform with a good deal less difficulty and a good deal less turmoil than did the little province of Manitoba. If hon. gentlemen will look at the documents relating to the suit that took place between the province of Manitoba and the Dominion, or if they will look at the speeches that were made by men speaking on behalf of the province and who know the circumstances of the case, they will find that, although I myself and others took strong ground against the principle of separation in education—and my opinions upon that subject are just as strong to-day as they were then—although we took strong ground upon that principle, yet the attacks we made were not so much on that account as they were on account of the fact that the separate school system of the province was admittedly inefficient, and that children were being allowed by thousands to grow up in absolute ignorance and illiteracy. That was the ground upon which we attacked that system. We said then: Your system is inefficient; you have taken the public money and you have not applied it for the purpose of giving the children the education they ought to have; and we pointed to the fact that in districts where this clerically controlled system had been in force, the children had grown up in ignorance and the population was illiterate, and that fact could not be disputed.

Sir, my hon. friend the Minister of Customs, speaking last night, referred to the fact that it was said that the province of Manitoba had been harsh in abolishing that system. Well, Sir, I am here to say that you cannot abolish abuses of that kind by handling people with kid gloves. I am here to say that if there is any act in my public life I am proud of, it is the fact that I was one of those who helped to abolish that system of education in Manitoba in the year 1890. I know perfectly well that I am speaking upon a subject upon which there may not be very much unanimity of opinion; but I claim the right to have my own opinion on this subject, and I do not think that any man in this House, Roman Catholic or Protestant, will think any the less of me because I have the courage to state what I think. Although that was the fact, and although my hon. friend who sits opposite, the member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), was one of those who tried to restore that inefficient system and compel us again to bring about a condition of affairs in which the public money would be wasted and a proper system of education would not be given to the children, they failed in that attempt. And why did they fail? They failed because the right hon. gentleman who

leads this government stood in their way—that is the reason why they failed. And I want to say that we from the province of Manitoba who were engaged in that contest have never forgotten that gentlemen on the other side of the House, that my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) with whom unfortunately I do not often agree, and many others, left their party upon that question and stood for what I believe to be the proper principle, and I venture to think that the gentlemen who did so will always be remembered as having on that important occasion done what they believed to be right, though contrary to the interests of their party. But my right hon. friend the Prime Minister did not take the stand he did because he necessarily agreed with the views that I entertained, and that we in the province of Manitoba entertained upon that subject. As I understand the right hon. gentleman, he has always been an advocate in principle of separate schools, he does not dispute that. But he did dispute the moral right of the gentlemen who then controlled the administration of Canada to override the deliberate judgment of the people of Manitoba upon a matter which was vital to them, and which we in the province of Manitoba knew very much more about than the gentlemen who were endeavouring to thwart us.

Now, notwithstanding the fact that our opinions upon that subject were so strong, notwithstanding the fact that we had gone through a violent contest, a contest in which the feelings of men were deeply aroused, nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Selkirk (Mr. Greenway) then the Prime Minister of Manitoba and my leader, and myself, at that time, prior to the year 1896, recognized the fact that it was necessary in some of these cases to compromise, that we could not expect to have, altogether and at all times, our own opinions carried out to the fullest possible extent. When the government of Sir Charles Tupper sent commissioners to the province of Manitoba for the purpose of discussing this question with us, the commissioners consisting of Lord Strathcona, then Sir Donald A. Smith, the late Mr. Dickey and Senator Desjardins—when they were sent up for the purpose of discussing this question, I had the honour of being appointed with one of my colleagues, Mr. Cameron, to discuss the question with them. We then recognized the fact that a compromise of some kind would probably have to be adopted in the end, and we made certain proposals to these gentlemen looking to a compromise with the view of meeting the wishes of our Roman Catholic friends. We told them that, whatever our private disposition might be, yet by reason of the pledges we had made to the people of the province of Manitoba in the election we had just gone through, we could not possibly compromise upon the