

hoped would meet the objection offered by the hon. member for South Bruce. There might be some amendments found necessary in the Bill, but he thought it would be found generally speaking to meet the requirements of the country. However, the government would be very glad to avail themselves as far as possible of such suggestions as might be made to them.

When the Bill was in committee Mr. Mackenzie proposed this clause, which was inserted in the Bill, not one member objecting to it, neither Sir John A. Macdonald, nor Sir Charles Tupper, nor any member on the government side of the House:

When and so soon as any system of taxation shall be adopted in any district or portion of the Northwest Territories, the Lieutenant Governor and council or assembly, as the case may be, shall pass all necessary ordinances in respect of education, and it shall therein be always provided that a majority of ratepayers in any district may establish such schools therein as they may think fit, and make the necessary assessment and rates therefor, and further that the minority of ratepayers therein whether Protestant or Roman Catholics, may establish separate schools therein, and that in such case the ratepayers establishing such Protestant or Roman Catholic separate schools shall be liable only to assessment of such rates as they impose upon themselves in respect thereof.

Now this Bill went over to the other branch of the legislature, and there also I will give to my hon. friend who interrupted me a moment ago, the whole history of the debate upon this Bill. Mr. Aikens, who was then a prominent member of that body, moved to strike out the education clause altogether. He was answered by my hon. friend and colleague of to-day, the Secretary of State, who then as now was the leader of the Senate:

Any gentleman would have to admit that it was the greatest possible relief to the people of Ontario that this question was settled for them, and was not, as in some of the other provinces, a source of constant discord. He was one of those who maintained that parents had a right to educate their children as they pleased, and that they ought not to be taxed to maintain schools to which they could not conscientiously send their children. Our whole system of government was based upon that sound principle.

Now, Sir, I will give to my hon. friend the opinion of the Hon. Mr. Brown. But, before doing so, let me give him the opinion of a prominent member of his own party, Sir Alexander Campbell, who was then leader of the Conservative party in the Senate. Sir Alexander Campbell spoke as follows:—

It would be much to be regretted if the amendment passed. The object of the Bill was to establish and perpetuate in the Northwest Territories the same system as prevailed in Ontario and Quebec and which had worked so well in the interests of peace and harmony with the different populations of those provinces. He thought the fairer course, and the better

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

one, for all races and creeds, was to adopt the suggestion of the government and enable people to establish separate schools in that territory and thus prevent the introduction of evils from which Ontario and Quebec had suffered, but had judiciously rid themselves.

I will now give to my hon. friend the language of Mr. Brown, this is it:

The safe way for us was to let each province suit itself in such matters. This country was filled by people of all classes and creeds, and there would be no end of confusion if each class had to have its own peculiar school system. It had been said this clause was put in for the protection of the Protestants against the Catholics, the latter being the most numerous. But he, speaking for the Protestants, was in a position to say that we did not want that protection.

Later on Mr. Brown spoke as follows:

Hon. Mr. Brown said he concurred with what had fallen from his hon. friends on the treasury benches, and from hon. gentlemen who had spoken on the amendment, with respect to the propriety of allowing separate schools. But the question was not whether those schools were right or wrong, good or bad, but as to whether it was wise for this country to deal with this question. He quite admitted the importance of the issue which had been raised—whether this matter should be referred to the province interested for settlement, or be brought to the Dominion legislature.

The moment—

—continued Mr. Brown—

—this Act passed and the Northwest became part of the union, they came under the Union Act, and under the provisions with regard to separate schools.

Sir, I commend this language to my hon. friend. I commend this language to every man in this House. There are to-day, as there were then, men in this House and out of it who do not believe in separate schools, but, as Mr. Brown said, the question is not whether that system is good or bad; that is not the question to-day, that is not the question of which Senator Brown spoke, it is not the question with which we have to deal. But we have another duty to perform. Mr. Brown, on the floor of the other branch of the legislature, said that his opinions in regard to separate schools had not changed. He said practically this to the parliament of Canada: There is a new territory, there is virgin soil where there is no population. Do not introduce separate schools into it, do not introduce that burning question into it, but the moment you have introduced separate schools you have solved the question forever, it is part of the union and the minority will have its right to such schools.

Mr. SPROULE. The right hon. gentleman—

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Now, we have introduced into this Bill—I beg my hon. friend's pardon.