

In three days' time—

I shall come back to this.

—February 20, a letter was received from His Excellency, Monseigneur Sbarretti, asking for a conference. This invitation was accepted, and His Excellency then presented the following memorandum, remarking that if we would place this on the statute-book of our province that it would greatly facilitate an early settlement of our mission, the fixing of our boundaries, which would be extended to the shores of Hudson bay. His Excellency further added that our failure to act in the past had prejudiced our claim for extension westward.

According to this statement, it appears that Mr. Rogers and Mr. Colin Campbell, who were the delegates of the Manitoba government, had a conference with Monseigneur Sbarretti, the Papal ablegate. There has been a rumour in the press—not in the press, but at all events, about the corridors of this House—that this conference had been brought about by means of one of my colleagues. I have to say to the House, and I have the authority of my colleague for this, that there never was any conference brought about by him between the delegates and Monseigneur Sbarretti, and I have to make the further statement that neither myself nor any of my colleagues were the intermediaries between Monseigneur Sbarretti and the delegates of Manitoba. If there has been such a conference how it came about I cannot say. Perhaps Monseigneur Sbarretti may have had previous communication with these gentlemen; I do not know. Perhaps he knew them and perhaps that is the reason why he called upon them to have a conference. At all events, it is no concern of mine. I know nothing, and I never knew anything of it until this day, nor did the government. What conversation took place between the papal ablegate, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Colin Campbell I do not know. This is a question, perhaps, as to which there may be something later on; I do not know. But, I take the statement as I find it here, and upon this statement I have the right to make some comments which may throw some light, perhaps, on what has taken place. Mr. Rogers says that the ablegate made this remark:

This invitation was accepted and His Excellency then presented the following memorandum, remarking that if we would place this on the statute-book of our province it would greatly facilitate an early settlement of our mission, the fixing of our boundaries, which would be extended to the shores of Hudson bay.

As to that, I have no reason to make any comment, because that is a thing as to which I know nothing. Then Mr. Rogers goes on to say:

His Excellency further added that our failure to act in the past had prejudiced our claim for extension westward.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

Well, Sir, I cannot conceive how the papal ablegate, or anybody else, could have stated that the failure of the province of Manitoba to amend the School Act prevented the extension of its boundaries westward and that if such had been done it would have facilitated this extension. I cannot conceive how it is possible that such a statement could have been made, considering the fact that since the month of July, 1896, when we came into office, up to the month of January, 1905, we never received from the government of Manitoba a communication asking for the extension of the boundaries of that province. There may have been resolutions passed by the legislature, asking for the extension of their boundaries; I do not know. I am told that there have been, and I have seen in the press that resolutions were passed in 1901, that resolutions were passed also, as I understand, in 1902, and resolutions were passed, I know, in 1905. In 1905, these resolutions were followed by executive action, they were called to our attention, but neither in 1901 nor in 1902, were these resolutions passed by the legislature of Manitoba, followed by executive action or called to the attention of the government of Canada. This morning, when I read the interview with Mr. Rogers, I asked myself if my memory was at fault, and if there had been any communication sent to us, which, in the multitude of things with which we are called upon to deal, I might have forgotten. I inquired of my colleagues if they had any recollection of any such communication being sent to us, and they all answered me they had no such recollection. I then inquired from the clerk of the Privy Council if there was anything in the archives of the department which would show that any such communication had been received by us, and I received this memorandum from the clerk of the Privy Council.

From June, 1896, to January, 1905, there is no record in the Privy Council office of a claim advanced by the province of Manitoba for the extension of its boundaries. In May, 1902, there was a protest from the Northwest Territories against the extension of the boundaries of the province of Manitoba.

Now, Sir, with these preliminary remarks I shall proceed to give my version of what took place between Mr. Colin Campbell and Mr. Rogers, and us, when they came here as delegates from the government of Manitoba. I shall take in the first place the following statement made by Mr. Rogers:

On February 13th we received a formal invitation by telegraph from Sir Wilfrid Laurier to come to Ottawa as soon as convenient. We left on February 14th and arrived on afternoon of the 16th, when we received a letter from Sir Wilfrid at the Russell House, saying that he would be pleased to meet us at his office at mid-day on Friday the 17th.

In this statement there is nothing which