

what may be not altogether unpardonable pride when I say, that I am not aware that the Protestant minority ever had any cause of complaint of the treatment they had received at the hands of the majority. One of the most eminent men of that day, one of the most eminent colleagues of Sir John Macdonald at the time of confederation, Sir John Rose, bore ample testimony to what I have now stated. This is what he said speaking in the confederation debate :

Now we, the English Protestant minority of Lower Canada, cannot forget that whatever right of separate education we have, was accorded to us in the most unrestricted way before the union of the provinces, when we were in a minority and entirely in the hands of the French population. We cannot forget that in no way was there any attempt to prevent us educating our children in the manner we saw fit and deemed best ; and I would be untrue to what is just if I forgot to state that the distribution of state funds for educational purposes was made in such a way as to cause no complaint on the part of the minority.

The system, as I said, was rudimentary ; it became more effective, more regulative, after the union of the two provinces, Upper and Lower Canada in 1841.

Mr. SPROULE. Would that not seem to be an argument in favour of leaving it to the provinces ?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I shall come to that presently and I hope I will be able to satisfy my hon. friend (Mr. Sproule) if he will have an open ear on this subject. In 1841 the parliament of United Canada passed a law for the establishment of schools all over the province. Section 11 of that statute provided that :

Whenever any number of the inhabitants of any township or parish professing a religious faith different from that of the majority of the inhabitants of such township or parish, shall dissent from the regulations, arrangements, or proceedings of the common school commissioners, with reference to any common school in such township or parish it shall be lawful for the inhabitants so dissenting, collectively to signify such dissent in writing to the clerk of the district council and it shall be lawful for such dissenting inhabitants to establish and maintain one or more common schools in the manner and subject to the visitation, conditions, rules and obligations in this Act provided, with reference to other common schools.

Section 12 enacted that :

No common schools shall be entitled to any apportionment of money out of the common school fund except on the terms and conditions following :

And so forth. No exception was made, whether they were separate or common schools. But it appears that some doubt arose in Upper Canada as to whether or not separate schools were entitled to state aid.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

In 1855 a school law was adopted and this section was passed.

Every such separate school shall be entitled to share in the fund annually granted by the legislature of the province for the support of common schools according to the average number of pupils attending such school during the twelve preceding months, or during the number of months that may have elapsed from the establishment of said such school as compared with the whole number of pupils attending the schools in the said city, town or village.

In 1863 a law was passed upon this same subject and that was the last passed on the subject by the old legislature of Canada before confederation, not to enact a new principle but simply to confirm the principle of separate schools. I remember very well—I was a young man in those days, a law student in Montreal—that the discussion of that law created a great deal of passion, but it was passed by an overwhelming majority in the parliament of Canada.

Before I proceed, let me make a few observations to show the origin and object of all this legislation concerning separate schools. You find in this legislation the terms constantly recurring of Protestant or Catholic. I need not say that the Christian religion is not only a religion founded on moral laws, prescribing moral duties, but it is also a religion of dogmas. Dogmas from the earliest times have occupied just as strong and commanding a position in the faith of all Christians as morals themselves. The reformation created a cleavage between Christians. The old section remained Roman Catholics ; the new called themselves Protestants. Between the Roman Catholics and Protestants there is a deep divergence in dogmas. Between the various Protestant denominations there are but small differences in dogmas ; the differences are more matters of discipline than of dogma. Therefore the old legislature of Canada, finding a population of Catholics and different denominations of Protestants all mixed together, finding only one cause of cleavage between them in Christian faith, that is dogmas, allowed religious teaching to be had in all the schools of our country, so that every man could give to his own child the religious tenets which he held sometimes dearer than life. That is the whole meaning of separate schools.

I have just stated that in 1863 a law was passed on this subject. At that time, in 1863, there were two men in Canada who each within his own circle and his own party, maintained a sovereign sway. One was Mr. Macdonald, now known to history as Sir John Macdonald, and the other was Mr. George Brown. Mr. Macdonald was a supporter of separate schools. He gave to the law of 1863 his vote and his influence. Mr. George Brown, on the contrary, was a most determined opponent of separate schools. He attacked the system relentlessly.