

So far have they carried their opposition that what was called 'passive resistance' was organized in every community in the kingdom where it was proposed to force the people to conform to a religious system against which their consciences protested. They refused to pay the taxes levied for educational purposes. In some cases ministers of the gospel were subjected to distress sales in order to collect the amount, even allowing their furniture being sold to satisfy the claim, and England, from the land's end to the Scottish border, has been in state of turmoil ever since on this question. In my opinion this legislation is the greatest blot upon the English statute-book that has been seen since the day of Magna Charta.

That is the opinion of a gentleman well qualified to judge of the British educational system and of the manner denominational schools are working out in Great Britain. Now it so happens that I belong to the church that has a preponderance of numbers in the British isles, but I am free to state that so far as I am able to judge of the legislation latterly put upon the statute books of Great Britain, it is not wise, and it is not in the interest of the great church to which I belong. So far as I am personally concerned I would be glad to see that speedily changed, and that the various dissenting bodies, as they are classed in the old country, should receive the very same consideration that the church of England receives in the British isles. I see no reason why that should not be allowed. Now the denominational system of schools, I understand, is that which prevails in Great Britain, and I do not believe it is satisfactory. But I have taken the trouble to consult still another authority on this subject, a gentleman who does not belong to this country. I will read a quotation from the Hon. Sir John Gorst, who is considered one of the best educational authorities in Great Britain, and this is what he says :

In the first place, so far as the mass of the youth of a country is concerned, the public instructor can only play a secondary part in the most important part of the education of the young—the development of character.

The character of a people is by far its most important attribute. It has a great deal more moment in the affairs of the world, and is a much more vital factor in the promotion of national power and influence, and in the spread of empire, than either physical or mental endowments. The character of each generation depends in the main upon the character of the generation which precedes it ; of other causes in operation the effect is comparatively small.

Another article which appeared in the 'Nineteenth Century' from the Hon. Mr. Gorst, a member of the same family, reads as follows :

The assertion that our entire system of education is totally wrong from beginning to end will probably scandalize both the conventional conservative and the progressive-minded educationalist. The vast majority of people either cling to the conviction that the system itself is adequate, or believe that its principles only

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require extension to meet the growing necessities of a rapid increase in population and commercial competition. Such persons can be induced to tinker with the existing machinery, but they are unable to grasp the idea that the whole foundations of our educational system are absolutely false in principle ; that most of the great educationalists and teachers of the past have expended their genius in building up this system upon altogether wrong lines, and that their efforts have had the effect of retarding, instead of encouraging, the intellectual development of the race.

Again at page 845 the article says :

The whole theory upon which our educational method is based is, in fact, utterly absurd and hopelessly unsuited to the ordinary conditions of life. If we wish to establish a rational system we must go to the root of the evil and build up an entirely new edifice upon fresh foundations.

These are the opinions of English educationalists upon the denominational schools which at present exist in the old country, and they show that the contention of hon. gentlemen opposite that it is wise to introduce such a school system into our Northwest is not well founded. We have been told by gentlemen on the other side of the House, especially by members coming from the Northwest, that we are not acquainted with their school system and are therefore not qualified to deal with it. We may not be as well versed as they are in the regulations governing these schools, but during this debate we have learned a great deal and we have had circulated amongst us a synopsis of the school ordinances of the Northwest, so that we are more or less familiar with the subject. I believe myself that these schools are well adapted for the Northwest Territories and I think that if the new provinces re-enact these they would be doing a wise thing, but I do not believe, Sir, that this parliament has the constitutional right to force a school system on the new provinces. While we may not have a full knowledge of the educational laws of the Territories, we perhaps have a better idea of what separate schools are than these members from the Northwest on the other side of the House have, and in this connection, I direct their attention to the history of separate schools in Ontario, particularly for the last sixty years. We have been told by the Minister of Finance and by some of his colleagues, that the educational clauses in this Bill will be a final settlement of the question for all time to come. Upon what authority do these gentlemen make the statement that this will be a final settlement ? Who is there in this House or out of it who can say that henceforth and for ever there will be no complaint with regard to educational matters in the Northwest Territories if these two small clauses are incorporated in the Bill ? I have here the history of the 'fight' as it is called, that has taken place in Ontario