

remembering all the difficulties which had arisen from the New Brunswick Act abolishing separate schools, he announced that he was going to embody the principle of those schools in the new constitution granted to that vast Northwest Territory. That proposal, which nobody expected, and which was well received by the great majority of the House, was an act worthy of praise and gratitude while it was, at the same time an indication of the progress of the spirit of toleration in the minds of Protestants throughout the Dominion. Previous to him, no minister had thought of this measure of justice and conciliation; and how was it received? His opponents said: 'That provision was not in the Bill when first introduced and consequently the idea is not his own; he has acted under outside pressure.' As if the idea should be scorned because it had not suggested itself to the Prime Minister's mind at the outset. But did that generous suggestion originate with the opposition? If so, when and by whom was it made and to whose pressure did Mr. Mackenzie submit? Even admitting that the suggestion was made to Mr. Mackenzie which is untrue, should he not have credit for having carried it out cheerfully and for having accomplished what nobody else had yet accomplished?

Moreover, that action on the part of Mr. Mackenzie is a proof of his kindly disposition towards religious minorities in all the provinces of the Dominion, and of his willingness to assist them wherever the impassable barriers of the constitution are not in the way.

The separate schools in the Northwest were considered so well established for all time, that Mr. P. A. Tremblay, an ex-member of this House for the county of Charlevoix, in 1878, in a political pamphlet intitled 'The government of the Dominion during the years 1874-75-76-77-78, wrote as follows in connection with separate schools in the Northwest:

Sir George Cartier and Mr. Langevin have not done anything comparable on behalf of the Catholics of Manitoba, who, under the law organizing that province, are subjected, like the Catholics in the province of New Brunswick, to the arbitrary rule of the majority.

The extracts I have quoted from the newspapers of 1875 are very instructive. They show that the two recognized organs of the English-speaking Tories of the province of Quebec, endorsed the establishment of separate schools in the Northwest in the interest of peace, immigration and settlement. As for the organs of the French-speaking Tories, such was their sense of approval that they claimed credit for their party on that account, while the Toronto 'Leader,' and a few other Tory newspapers in Ontario and New Brunswick, raised the cry of French domination, exactly in the same way as the Toronto 'News' and the Toronto 'World' are doing to-day, though the former showed less wrath and did not publish such offensive cartoons against Catholics and French Canadians.

Those extracts, moreover, corroborate the statement made by the Prime Minister, that

the Act of 1875, as understood and interpreted at the time, was final, because its object was to prevent any re-occurrence of the agitation brought about by the school question in New Brunswick. We may judge, Sir, from what is going on to-day, how wise our legislators of the year 1875 have proven themselves to be.

The political events of the last thirty years show that the British North America Act of 1876 did not adequately safeguard religious beliefs, vested rights, the rights of minorities and the principle of the equality of all races and religious denominations under the constitution. Sir John Macdonald stated, however, in 1890, at the time the House was discussing Mr. McCarthy's Bill prohibiting the use of the French language, in official matters in the Northwest Territories:

We have a constitution under which all British subjects are on a footing of absolute equality as regards language, religion, property and personal rights.

Unfortunately the school difficulties in New Brunswick and Manitoba, which in both cases, resulted almost in civil war, have caused such dissatisfaction among the French and Catholic inhabitants of this country, that they have been led to take, and still take a different view from that expressed above by Sir John Macdonald; and the open breaking of the constitution of the Northwest Territories, in 1892, as regards separate schools, has put a great many of the Canadian subjects of His Majesty under the painful impression that, in order to obtain justice and the recognition of their rights, it is indispensable that detailed and minute compacts and agreements be entered into. To prevent in the two new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, a recurrence of events similar to those which took place in New Brunswick in 1871, in Manitoba in 1890, in the Northwest Territories in 1892, such should be the main object of the legislation now under discussion; for, in my humble opinion, the land question and the money question, all-important though they be as regards the administration and establishment of these new provinces, are only of secondary importance as compared with that which concerns liberty of conscience and religious equality under the law. It is necessary, then, that the foundations on which we are building up these two great provinces, whose future is bound to be so brilliant, should be broad, strong, capable of upholding all nationalities and creeds which our vigorous immigration policy directs, from year to year, by hundreds of thousands, to those vast and fertile Territories. By establishing, or rather by guaranteeing to them in the constitution which we are granting, a system of separate schools, that which exists to-day, and is operated to the satisfaction of the parties interested, we are ensuring to them a future of peace, of good