

# RESIGNATION OF THE HON. CLIFFORD SIFTON.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). I have to inform the House that my colleague, Hon. Mr. Sifton, has resigned his position in the government, and as Minister of the Interior. Mr. Sifton finds himself unable to agree with the terms of the Bill which has lately been introduced for the admission into the Dominion of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, his disagreement being confined altogether to the educational clause. After a conference with him, the following correspondence has been exchanged between him and myself:

Ottawa, February 27, 1905.

Dear Sir Wilfrid,—After giving my best consideration to the matters which we discussed last evening, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is impossible for me to continue in office under present circumstances, and that it is better for all concerned that I should act at once. I therefore beg to tender my resignation as a member of the government. I trust that the unhappy necessity which has arisen will not in the least impair the friendship with which you have been kind enough to honour me.

Believe me,

Yours most faithfully,

CLIFFORD SIFTON.

Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, G.C.M.G.,  
Ottawa.

To this I answered yesterday in the following terms:

Ottawa, February 28, 1905.

My dear Sifton,—I received yesterday your letter of same date, whereby you tender me your resignation as a member of the government.

There is no alternative to me, but to accept it, and with much regret, it will be my duty to place it in the hands of His Excellency.

After our conversation of the other day, I had left you with the impression that the differences between us were more of words than of substance, and until I received your letter, I had cherished the hope that it would be possible ere this to find a comparatively easy solution.

Whilst I feel more regret than I can express at this termination of our official relations, let me assure you that should our old friendship be ever impaired, the fault will not be mine.

Yours very sincerely,

WILFRID LAURIER.

The Hon. Clifford Sifton, Ottawa.

The resignation has been placed in the hands of His Excellency, who has been pleased to accept it.

Hon. CLIFFORD SIFTON. The statement made by the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) necessitates a very short explanation to the House on my part. When it was determined that during this session of parliament legislation should be introduced creating new provinces out of a portion of the Northwest Territories, I felt called upon, in view of the history of

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the educational question in Canada, to give very serious consideration to the position which I should take with regard to the legislative power to be conferred upon the provinces in regard to the subject of education. It was necessary that conferences should take place with members of parliament representing the Northwest Territories and with the representatives of the Territorial government, upon the subject of education and other subjects involved in the Bill. These conferences were unavoidably postponed until after the beginning of the new year, by reason of the absence of the Prime Minister, who, after the general election, was compelled to take a short rest, and was therefore absent from the country. Shortly before the time fixed for holding these conferences I was compelled by my own state of health to leave Ottawa, and was therefore unable to be present at the discussions which took place. Before leaving I discussed with the Prime Minister most of the subjects that necessarily required to be dealt with in the Bill which was to be introduced, and so far as I was able to do so at that time, I communicated my views to him upon the various subjects. I may say that when I went away I did not anticipate that it would be considered necessary to introduce the Bill for creating the new provinces, before I returned. As members of the House are aware, I returned to the capital on Thursday afternoon. I immediately took occasion to read carefully the speech which the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) had delivered in introducing the Bill. I regretted that in the right hon. gentleman's address I found some principles enunciated with which I am unable to agree. On Friday, the next day after I returned, at the earliest possible moment, I procured a copy of the educational clause of the Bill which my leader had introduced. That clause is as follows:

16. The provisions of section 93 of the British North America Act, 1867, shall apply to the said provinces as if, at the date upon which this Act comes into force, the territory comprised therein were already a province, the expression 'the union' in the said section being taken to mean the said date.

2. Subject to the provisions of the said section 93, and in continuance of the principles heretofore sanctioned under the Northwest Territories Act, it is enacted that the legislature of the said province shall pass all necessary laws in respect of education, and that it shall therein always be provided (a) that a majority of the ratepayers of any district or portion of the said province or of any less portion or subdivision thereof, by whatever name it is known may establish such schools therein as they think fit, and make the necessary assessments and collection of rates therefor, and (b) that the minority of the ratepayers therein whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, may establish separate schools therein, and make the necessary assessment and collection of rates therefor, and (c) that in such case the ratepayers establishing such Protestant or Roman Catholic separate schools shall be liable only to assess-