

to settle this question would be to let the thing alone for three years, and it would cure itself. We have heard him over and over again in this chamber, from the seat occupied by my hon. friend to my right (Mr. Ferguson) declare that the late government was recreant in its duty, and cowardly in its actions: why? because they did not disallow the Act in the first place.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Hear, hear.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—And in the next breath we heard his leader, and others by whom he is surrounded, declare that there should be no interference, good, bad or indifferent, with the provincial governments, whether they act within the constitution or not. They can take whichever horn of the dilemma they please at the present moment, and the country will be able to judge of the results. Now, what the terms of the present settlement are, I am not in a position to say. I promise him this, however, that if any measure be introduced, if such be necessary, or any arrangement made between the two governments which will satisfy the people of that province and the minority whose rights I always thought, and still think, were invaded they shall have my most hearty support, and I think when I say that that I can speak for every member on both sides of the House, who differs from the general principles which actuate and guide the present government. What we desire is to have that question removed from the arena of federal politics. When they accuse the old government of having kept that question before the people for special purposes, they are uttering what the records will not establish. If race and religion have been introduced into this question it lies more at the door of those who gained at the last election by that appeal to race and creed than with the old government. It never was a question with me, or those with whom I acted, whether the majority were Roman Catholics or Protestants. I took this ground in the government of which I had the honour of being the head for a short time, and the government of which I was a member under other heads, that certain rights were guaranteed by the constitution to all, whatever their race or creed might be, and that these rights should be respected at all hazards. I am still of that opinion, whether the complaint come from the Pro-

testants of Lower Canada or the French half-breeds of the North-west is a matter of perfect indifference to me—it is simply a question of the constitution and the maintenance of peace and harmony throughout the country. I observe that the commission, of which my hon. friend opposite was to have been the head, has not yet been appointed to accomplish a settlement of the question. We know how successful he has been in the province of Ontario. We know the agitations which have taken place and the stand which he has taken upon the question of separate schools and the education of the people of Ontario. My hon. friend will give me the credit of having, since I first entered parliament, been outspoken in the declaration of my views, whether they differ from those of my leader or not. I never approved of the policy pursued by some of the Conservative party in Ontario upon this question, nor was Sir William Meredith, now Chief Justice, a party to that movement. I do not approve of it to-day. There is, to my mind, but one safe course to pursue by any man who attempts to govern, or assists in governing this country, and that is to take the constitution as it stands and adhere to it as rigidly as possible, maintaining the rights of all classes of the people, and more particularly all minorities. I ask, are you going to accomplish this great feat of settling the vexed question of the Manitoba schools by an interview with the Attorney General of Manitoba, and by means of that kindly and placid manner in which my hon. friend can deal with all questions of this kind? Let me refer my hon. friend to the speeches of Mr. Sifton, the Attorney General of Manitoba, when he went to enlighten the people of Haldimand on this question. Let us take the utterances of their organs in the North-west Territories, where they make the most solemn declarations that no interference can take place with the school law. Let us take the utterances of some of the hon. gentleman's colleagues—of Mr. Geoffrion, of Mr. Tarte and others, who have declared that no settlement can possibly take place which would be accepted by the minority, unless it places the schools exclusively under the control of their church. Those gentlemen have gone so far as to declare that the issuing of certificates, and government inspection, would be an infringement of their rights. Are they prepared to adhere to that, or are they going to gulp down all their declarations in the