

*To His Excellency the Governor General of Canada in Council :*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

The petition of the undersigned, His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec, the Most Reverend Archbishops and the Right Reverend the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in the Dominion of Canada, devoted subjects of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, humbly sheweth :

1. Since the establishment of the province of Manitoba, until 1890, the public schools of the province, as established by law, were either Protestant or Catholic schools. They all enjoyed the same rights and received respectively their legitimate share of legislative grants. They were independent one from another, being conducted directly and supported by the respective sections of the population for which they were established. The system gave such satisfaction that it was the cause of no complaint, and the two sections of the population with their respective schools lived in peace, concord, harmony and mutual good will.

2. In 1890, laws were passed, changing the school system and replacing it by other enactments which are, for a portion of the community, a source of grief, regret and hardship. Practically, and in spite of all assertions to the contrary, the result of the new system is purely and simply the legal suppression of all Catholic schools and the maintenance of all Protestant schools, with all the rights and privileges they enjoyed previous to the school laws of 1890. Catholic schools are abolished by law, while Protestant schools have nothing to suffer from the new enactment, nay, they gain by it as the Catholic ratepayers have now to help to the support of Protestant schools, which are exactly what they were, and to which, naturally, Catholic parents cannot conscientiously send their children.

3. The Public Schools Act of 1890 being 53 Vic., chap. 38, now chap. 127, of Revised Statutes of 1891, decrees in sections 241-242, that "in cases where, before the coming into force of this Act, Catholic school districts have been established, covering the same territory as any Protestant school district, such Catholic school districts shall cease to exist."

The law has been put into force wheresoever it could be applied, for instance in Winnipeg, Brandon, &c. There the Catholic trustees have ceased to be recognized since the 1st of May, 1890, while the Protestant trustees remained in office and caused taxes to be levied on Catholic as well as Protestant parents, notwithstanding the fact that no Catholic children are attending the said Protestant schools.

4. Section 192 says: "Religious exercises in the public schools shall be conducted according to regulations of the Advisory Board." It is therefore lawful to have prayers and religious exercises in the public schools of Manitoba, provided the same are fixed and determined by the Advisory Board. Just now, all the members of the said board are Protestants, and owing to the condition of the country it is clear that Catholics will never have but very little influence, if any, in the said board.

Therefore Protestant children will be allowed to pray according to their parents' desire, while Catholic children are deprived of the same liberty, and this under the penalty of forfeiting the legitimate share of public money, because in order to secure to his or her school the government grant, the teacher must declare under oath that no prayer nor religious exercise, except as prescribed by the Advisory Board, has been used in the school. Suppose a school attended exclusively by Catholic children, with a Catholic teacher, the said school would be deprived of the legislative grant, should the teacher or the pupils cross themselves or make use of the Hail, Mary.

5. Religious instruction is not prohibited in the public schools of Manitoba; in that respect and under the heading of morals, the regulations framed under the old system by the Protestant section of the board are retained under the new system; "stories, memory gems, sentiments in the school lessons, examination of motives, didactic talks, teaching the Ten Commandments, &c., are means to be employed." All this of course is to be used from a Protestant point of view, so much so that the actual chairman of the Advisory Board, who had always been the chairman of the Protestant section of the Board of Education, and who is no less a personage than the Archbishop of Rupert's