

Any layman, priest, bishop or cardinal who does not subscribe to the Nationalist dogma is denounced in the most un-Catholic manner in the French Nationalist press.

We trust that the Ottawa School Question will not be a second Manitoba School Question.

We are anxious to fulfil our duties as Catholic school trustees, and in the present critical juncture look confidently to ecclesiastical authority for the necessary guidance and assistance.

We have the honour to subscribe ourselves,

Your Eminence's most obedient servants,

Signed:

J. F. LANIGAN,
M. J. O'NEILL,
A. J. BRENNAN.

R. MACKELL,
H. F. SIMS,
JAMES FINN.
Separate School Trustees.

History of the Ottawa School Question

Compiled chiefly from a Memoir presented to Mgr. Sbarretti in 1906.

The Separate Schools Act under which the Catholic schools of this city are conducted was passed in 1863. At that time there were five wards in the city, namely: Victoria, Wellington, St. George's, By and Ottawa. In the three first mentioned wards the English-speaking Catholics were an overwhelming majority, and in By Ward they had a working majority. The French controlled Ottawa Ward. This condition continued for twelve years until the French had increased in By and Victoria Wards.

The election of Separate School Trustees in cities is provided for by subsection 1 of section 30 of the Act which is as follows:

"For every ward into which any city is divided there shall be two school trustees, each of whom shall continue in office for two years and until his successor has been elected."

There is nothing said about the nationality or the language of the trustee so that the electors were and are at liberty to select whom they please.

CONCESSION TO FRENCH.

Such being the fact, it is instructive to recall the conduct of the English-speaking Catholics towards the French while the former were the majority in four of the five wards of the city. From the very first they allowed the French to elect from among their number one trustee in each ward. Thus the French were at the outset, and during the years that they remained a minority, given a representation at the board to which they were not entitled except through the generosity of the English-speaking Catholics of the city. Out of this voluntary concession on the part of the English-speaking majority grew the custom or understanding whereby those of one nationality were not to interfere or take part in the elections of the other. The concession so made to the French had no more sanction in law than the division later of the School Board into an English and a French committee, but neither the French nor their clergy were ever heard to complain of it on that account.

However, this equality of representation did not conduce to the harmony of the board or to the efficiency of the schools. Difficulties arose at an early date and continued to increase in proportion to the growth of the French population of the city. At the beginning of the year 1886 the condition of affairs was such that the board was practically unable to conduct its ordinary business; the schools were mismanaged and insufficient, and the English-speaking rate-payers realized that if they were to maintain their religious and educational standing in the community a change of some kind in the management of the