

As you are well aware, the present political situation has become of grave concern by reason of the Manitoba school question. I need not tell you how anxiously I have watched this matter since the day it first arose. My opinions on the subject have never been concealed. In all my addresses to the Orange Association, in my capacity of Grand Sovereign, as well as my utterances from political platforms, I have taken the ground that the education of our children should be attained through the medium of public schools, and I was pleased when in the important province of Manitoba and in our North-west Territories—soon, we all fervently hope, to become populous and prosperous parts of our great Dominion—legislation was carried looking to the establishment of a common school system free from sectarianism.

The hon. member for West York then went on to make some observations about the letter of Bishop Gravelle, which, not being pertinent to the present matter, I pass over, but he concluded in this way :

Without dwelling longer upon this incident, continued the speaker, let me state to you briefly the attitude that I take under the present circumstances on this question. The Government after the last decision of the Judicial Committee referred the question to Manitoba, as provided by the constitution, ordering the authorities of that province to restore the separate school system in existence prior to 1890. The Manitoba government, with the concurrence of the legislature of that province, has declined to do so, but at the same time has intimated that if any real grievances exist on the part of the minority they will be removed, although still insisting upon the maintenance unimpaired of the public school system. The Dominion Government as a consequence has pledged itself before Parliament and the country to accept the offer of Manitoba to consider a basis of settlement before the next meeting of Parliament, and in the event of failure, to introduce legislation at the next session of Parliament. Now, for my own part—

I draw the attention of the House to this :

—and I speak under full sense of the responsibility of my utterances I have to say frankly but firmly that I favour the maintenance of a non-sectarian school system in Manitoba and that if our constitution permitted, I would advocate with the same fervour a similar system throughout the Dominion. (Applause.) I propose, however, to await events, rather than to anticipate those which may never occur. Nor do I intend to be led or entrapped into precipitate action upon the subject by any device, no matter from what quarter it may come. Our duty, it seems to me, is to adhere resolutely to the main principles—to keep them always in view, swerving neither to the right nor to the left—and in this position I trust that I shall have not only the approbation of yourselves but the support of the great majority of the people of Canada.

I think that the hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace) did not, in the slightest degree, conceal that he was opposed, and determinedly opposed, to the remedial policy of the Government; and yet, Sir, that hon. gentleman was permitted to remain a member of that Government, and the hon. member who thought proper this afternoon to assail him in unmeasured terms, was the Minister who, at that time, rose to his feet

to defend and justify that position. Surely if the hon. member for West York was wrong, as, in my humble opinion, he was, in not withdrawing from the Government, when announcing that his policy in this important matter was diametrically opposed to that of the Government, it does not lie in the mouths of his colleagues—who then approved of his remaining in the Cabinet, and endeavoured, no doubt, to have him remain there as long as possible—to denounce him here in the language meted out to him this afternoon.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER. Mr. Speaker, would the hon. gentleman tell me wherein I assailed the hon. member for West York for his conduct, until November, 1895? I have no recollection of it.

Mr. McCARTHY. I am beginning to fear, Sir, that the hon. gentleman is hopeless. He occupied for some little time the position of Minister of Justice of this country. He is the author, I believe, of this famous remedial order, this absolutely hopeless and indefensible remedial order, and I am beginning to think, the more I see and hear of him, that he is actually incapable of appreciating the difference between right and wrong. He says he did not assail the hon. member for West York until November last. He had not a word to say against the hon. member for West York when that gentleman was denouncing the policy of the Government of which he was a member, speaking on public platforms against it, doing all he could to destroy it. But when the hon. gentleman consistently retired from office—which is certainly a virtue the hon. member for Pictou cannot claim, except when he brought about the re-entrance of his ancient and venerable parent into public life—then he assails him, and I really am unable to understand the hon. gentleman's principles. If the hon. member for West York was sincere, as, no doubt, he was, I think he erred only in resigning too late rather than in resigning at all. He sacrificed his constituency for the time, and I dare say he feels it and knows it now, in order to avoid sacrificing his party, in order to avoid a split in the party ranks and injury to his friends. But the hon. member for Pictou assails my hon. friend from West York for having resigned his position and deciding to do what the great body of men on this side of the House would do if they stood by their convictions—vote against the policy and the legislation that we have before us this evening.

My hon. friend for Albert (Mr. Weldon) is here and can speak for himself. He also underwent a castigation, if it can be called so, from the hon. gentleman who formerly occupied a position which gave him some standing in this House, which I am afraid he cannot hold upon his own merits. I shall leave the hon. member for Albert to defend himself from the attack, such as it was.