

Mr. T. C. Wallbridge—That destroys the power of the local legislatures to legislate upon the subject.

Hon. Mr. Brown—I would like to know how much power the hon. gentleman has now to legislate upon it? Let him introduce a Bill to-day to annul the compact of 1863 and repeal all the sectarian school Acts of Upper Canada, and how many votes would he get for it?.....What has rendered prominent public men in one section utterly unpopular in the other in past years? Has it not been our views on trade and commerce? No, Sir; it was our views as to the applying of public money to local purposes—the chartering of ecclesiastical institutions, the granting of money for sectarian purposes, the interference with our school system, &c. A most happy day will it be for Canada when this Bill goes into effect and all these subjects of discord are swept from the discussion of our legislature. But, Mr. Speaker, I am further in favour of this scheme as a remedial measure, because it brings to an end the doubt that has so long hung over our position, and gives a stability to our future, in the eyes of the world, that could not otherwise have been attained.

There is a great deal in what the Hon. Mr. Brown said at that time which might be applied to the situation to-day. He admitted that the local legislatures could not annul the privilege. Mr. Brown and the assembly thus declared that a concession was made and a great principle established—that the rights of the minorities could not be interfered with by the local legislatures. In fact, a national guarantee was given. Now, Sir, I have quoted enough to show the nature of the compact—how it was approached and how it was understood and explained by those who were the fathers of confederation. What has been the position since 1867? Harmony, peace and concord. Shall we reopen an old sore? Shall we go back to chronic discord and religious strife? What I have quoted, I think, indicates that, after the troublesome times of religious strife, which had nearly ruined the prospects of Canada, a spirit of toleration and conciliation spread over Canada, and over those who had at heart the interests of the country, and they were ready to sink their differences and unite together to guarantee to the minority the rights they possessed, and they have enjoyed those rights ever since. To-day we ask that the same rights shall be granted to the minority in the province of Manitoba. Recently, in looking over some old books, it was a curious coincidence at this particular moment, that I opened an old book called a "Digest of the Synod Minutes of the Presbyterian Church of Canada," prepared by the Rev. Mr. Kemp, of the Free Church, of Montreal, in which I read the following passage, which appears in the introduction, and which I quote to show how remarkably well the Catholics and Protestants got on together in the province of Quebec in almost every period of its history:—

About the year 1790, the Presbyterians of Montreal, of all denominations, both British and

American, organized themselves into a church, and in the following years secured the services of the Rev. John Young. At this time they met in the Recollet Roman Catholic Church, but in the year following they erected the edifice which is now known as St. Gabriel Street Church, the oldest Protestant Church in the province. In their early minutes we find them, in acknowledgment of the kindness of the Recollet Fathers, presenting them with one box of candles and one hog-head of Spanish wine.

That indicates the state of feeling that existed in 1790, and I hope that we shall not go back on our history and show less toleration to-day.

Now, Sir, I would like to pass to another branch of the question, that is, the respective attitudes of the two great parties towards this question. When the late-lamented Sir John Thompson was leading the Government, and when he had the conduct of this vexed question, he announced in Ontario, in Quebec, in the House, and wherever he had occasion to speak, that the policy of the Government was to stand by the decision of the tribunals; and, Sir, that is the policy which has been faithfully adhered to by the present Government and by the party supporting that Government. It will be within the recollection of every hon. member, that, when the Barrett case was decided against the minority, the minority submitted, because they knew that the policy of the Government was not to import this question into the political arena, but to keep it out of that arena, and to have it decided by the tribunals, where, it was considered, all such matters should be discussed and determined.

Now, Sir, as I wish to avoid wearying the House by reading the declarations of Ministers on this subject, made in Parliament, I ask permission to put in these declarations, which are all taken from the official records. If that is permissible, it will save a great deal of the time of the House.

Mr. LAURIER. Follow the rule.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. Then I shall read the declaration of the hon. First Minister (Sir Mackenzie Bowell) to the Senate. He said:

In reply to the hon. leader of the Opposition I am prepared to state the decision at which the Government has arrived on the Manitoba school question. I desire to state that the Government has had under consideration the reply of the Manitoba legislature to the remedial order of the 21st March, 1895, and after careful deliberation has arrived at the following conclusion:—

Though there may be a difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of the reply in question, the Government believes that it may be interpreted as holding out some hope of an amicable settlement of the Manitoba school question on the basis of possible action by the Manitoba government and legislature, and the Dominion Government is most unwilling to take any action which can be interpreted as forestalling or precluding such a desirable consummation.

The Government has also considered the difficulties to be met with in preparing and perfecting