



THE OPENING NOTES OF PROTEST

The Quebec Government Policy of Excluding Irish Catholic Laymen on the School Board Condemned.

IMPORTANT CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE PREMIER OF QUEBEC AND MR. P. KENNEDY, M.L.A.

Again the School Board. In this issue we publish two letters which passed between the Honorable Premier Taillon and our representative in the Assembly, Mr. P. Kennedy. We also offer to our readers the first of a series of interviews with Irish Catholics, which it is our intention to present each week until we have exhausted the resources in this city, and every corner of this Province wherever THE TRUE WITNESS is read. Of the communication addressed by the Honorable Premier to Mr. Kennedy, we have only to say, that it merely illustrates the measure of sympathy and the solicitude which he possesses regarding the fairness and justness of the principle of Irish Catholic representation on the School Commission, as well as the eagerness he displays in shirking a duty which does not deserve the title of a serious responsibility, because it is nothing more or less than one of those questions which, in the hands of a statesman, would be regarded as an inherent right of an important section of a community. The question of Irish Catholic representation is no mere ordinary act of government routine, to be discussed at the whim and fancy of our provincial legislators, or to be made the subject of the dictatorial oscillations of a certain few outside administrators who appear to be the guiding stars in this crusade against it; neither should it be made the play-toy of any political faction or party, because we fearlessly proclaim our conviction that the justice of the principle emanates from a higher source, that veritable oasis from which springs the streams that serve to stimulate the growth of that true peace and harmony and the consequent recognition of the claim of any section for equal rights and equal privileges in proportion to their status in the country.

During more than a decade this question of Irish Catholic representation on the school Board has been the prolific cause of unrest and annoyance. Last year we were led to believe that the matter was definitely disposed of by the appointment of Mr. Frank Hart. During several months previous to Mr. Hart's appointment we persistently and earnestly supplicated the Government at Quebec to recognize the claim of Irish Catholic representation on the commission, and when at length we learned that Mr. Kennedy, our local member, had been applied to and requested to suggest the name of some representative Irish Catholic layman for the position, we felt that it was a move in the right direction and not only a just acknowledgment of the claims of those whom it is our proud privilege to represent, but that it was also another evidence of wisdom on the

part of the Government to evince a disposition to appreciate the broadness and fulness of the underlying principle of our system of government by consulting the immediate representatives of the people who were seeking to redress a wrong. It was at this juncture that Mr. Kennedy placed the name of Mr. Hart in nomination, which resulted in the acceptance of that estimable gentleman by the Government. Why did they not continue to recognize the same principle of procedure previous to the dismissal of Mr. Hart and seek the views of the member for St. Ann's division, who is regarded as the representative of the Irish Catholics by virtue of his position.

Has political etiquette changed to such a degree as to warrant an Executive to administer a twofold snub in the manner it did? What occult forces were leagued together to urge it to indulge in such folly? Who was responsible for the nomination of Dr. Brennan? Were the parish priests invited to offer a suggestion, even admitting for a moment that the law obliged the Government to nominate professors of universities, which we contend was never intended in our particular case, and even if it were necessary to insist upon such a qualification, why was Dr. Hingston, an Irish Catholic, who stands foremost in the ranks of his profession, and occupies a place of distinction in the midst of the professors of universities, passed over, not mentioning a large number of other professional men whose education and sympathies are essentially Irish Catholic, and whose standing in the community entitles them to greater consideration than Dr. Brennan, as they would be acceptable to our people? Was the Irish Catholic representative in the Local Legislature offered an opportunity to tender his opinion? Were any of the Irish Catholic public men, whose good counsel and assistance is valued during the progress of an electoral contest, sought out for an expression of their views? Were the Irish Catholic people in any manner or form consulted? We answer emphatically: No. But on the contrary they were flagrantly ignored in the most disrespectful way and disenfranchised in a manner which is a violation and abridgment of their rights as citizens living under a free government, and treated as a special class who need only expect special definitions of that fundamental portion of our constitution which protects all sections in their claims and rights for representation in all public administrative bodies.

What will be the next step to be taken by the potentates at Quebec if they are permitted to proceed in this unjust

fashion and ride rough shod over the rights of our people? Is this campaign of ostracism to continue, and is the school commission arena merely the great rallying point where the opening trumpet blast has been sounded for another attack? These are questions which every Irish Catholic elector in this province of Quebec should earnestly and sincerely consider ere the dawn of another election day. We have determined to settle this question of public representation on the School Commission once and for all, and we now have no hesitation in plainly stating that the only adjustment acceptable to the Irish Catholic people, who would have a week ago held a mass meeting to give vent to their indignation were it not for our advice to proceed slowly and cautiously, is the reinstatement of Mr. Hart. We regret most exceedingly that an attempt has been made to introduce the ecclesiastical authorities into this matter so as to make it appear that we were assuming a position diametrically opposed to them. We need only say in answer to that indictment that our columns will bear testimony of our loyalty and respect for that authority, and that in the past we have been true to our mission. So we will continue in the future to stand in the front rank whenever needed in defence of the noble cause of Our Religion and Country.

MR. KENNEDY'S LETTER.

QUEBEC, July, 11th, 1894.

To HON. L. O. TAILLON, Premier, Executive Council.

DEAR SIR,—I am in receipt of your letter and regret very much that Mr. Hart is deprived of his seat on the School Commissioners. You have slighted me very much, I look upon it as a downright insult; I was the means of Mr. Hart being appointed and you have put him off the board without saying one word to me about it and I think I deserve something better from the government. As for Doctor Brennan, I don't know him, but there is one thing I know, he is not the man to replace Mr. Hart. Respectfully yours,
(Signed), P. KENNEDY.

PREMIER TAILLON'S REPLY.

QUEBEC, 12th July, 1894.

MR. KENNEDY, M. P. P.

DEAR SIR,—In reply to yours of 11th inst., I must say the Government had to act according to the law, and that the exact intent of the law being that the School Commissioners are to be appointed by Government and to be chosen from members of a university, Mr. Hart could not be appointed because he is not a member of a university. Is that restriction of the law wise or not?—that is a different question; if it is not wise it will be for those who are opposed to it to move an amendment at the next session. I may add that law, on consideration, was the result of a conference of public instructors and that all bishops of the province formed part of the council,—do you think they are not proper persons to decide such questions?

I hope Mr. Hart will not persist in taking as an insult the act of the Government, and if he does he will show that he is not fit to be a School Commissioner. Sincerely yours,
(Signed), L. O. TAILLON.

Following are opinions of some of our fellow-citizens regarding the Government's action:—

Doctor Hingston, when interviewed, said:—"I was under the impression that while Mr. Hart was School Commissioner he did his work satisfactorily and well." Dr. Hingston, therefore, did not see the necessity for his removal.

Ald. P. KENNEDY, M.P.P., was very indignant at Mr. Hart's removal from the Board of School Commissioners and expressed himself very strongly in the matter; speaking of Mr. Hart, he said a better man to represent us could not be found; Mr. Hart has no axe to grind except in the interest of the Irish Catholic people; as for Dr. Brennan, he may be a very capable man, but he is not a well known Irish Catholic like Mr. Hart, and therefore we don't wish him to represent us.

Ald. NOLAN says for executive ability, integrity and general fitness for the office of School Commissioner no better man than Mr. F. Hart could be put forward. Mr. Nolan does not see that the classical knowledge of a college professor is more valuable than the good sound judgment of a man of business. It may be more valuable in its proper sphere, but in the school commission we want practical financiers, and it is not usual to expect commercial knowledge and a prosaic business ability from a professor of a college, no matter how brilliant he may be in his own particular sphere.

Mr. P. WRIGHT, of Notre Dame street, in conversation with a TRUE WITNESS reporter, said:—The editorials on the school question in the TRUE WITNESS are excellent and deserve every credit for their boldness. We Irish Catholics are unanimous in our resolve to be represented by Irish Catholics. Dr. Brennan is not an Irishman, he is a French Canadian in education and sympathies; he has never identified himself with the Irish people, and while personally he may be a very capable and desirable man to fill the position on the board, he is unknown to the Irish Catholics as a body; therefore he is not wanted to represent them. If the Government have any objections to Mr. Hart they have not been made known, and if their objections are that Mr. Hart is not a professor we are quite willing to acknowledge them. But we can put forward the names of half a dozen representative Irishmen who are professors and possess as high, if not higher, educational qualifications than Doctor Brennan, and in addition, they are Irish in every sense of the word, and are not French Canadians. All the Irish Catholics of Montreal are determined to have justice done to them in this matter. They wish to be represented by a representative Irish Catholic, and if the Government demands that their representative must be a professor, we have perhaps half a dozen well known Irish Catholics who are professors. Why are they not approached on the subject?

Mr. RICHARD McSHANE, when interviewed by the TRUE WITNESS reporter, said:—"I fully endorse the editorial in the TRUE WITNESS on Mr. Hart's dismissal as one of the School Commissioners, the lame excuse only adds to the outrage. Who ordered the appointment of Dr. Brennan? We have some Irish parish priests who take an interest in the education of the children of their respective parishes; we have an Irish representative, has his opinion not been asked? It ought to be equally as good now as at election time. The only thing that I can see which would be objectionable to some of his fellow commissioners was his determined effort to do full justice to those whom he represented. But as Mr. Hart was not a pleasant tool he had to go. The hornet's nest which the wire-pullers have pulled about their ears will form a far more troublesome thing to themselves than they had at first imagined, for the Irish Catholics are absolutely unanimous in their determination to have redress at any cost for the injustice that has been done them.

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