

Mr. George E. Cartier, replying to Mr. Webb (of Richmond and Wolfe), said :

As a Catholic and as a member of the Canadian Government, I now reiterate that when the measure for the settlement of the local government comes before the House for discussion, it will be such as to satisfy the Protestant minority of Lower Canada.

Hon. Mr. Belleau said :

The hon. member for Wellington (Hon. Mr. Sanborn) laid great stress on the danger which might be incurred by the Protestant minority in the local legislature of Lower Canada. He fears that they may not be sufficiently protected by the Catholic majority in respect of their religion, their schools and possibly their property. I heard that remark with pain; but I can tell him, the Protestant minority of Lower Canada have nothing to fear from the Catholic majority of that province; their religion is guaranteed by treaty, and their schools and their rights which may be connected with them, are to be settled by legislation to take place hereafter, and when that legislation is laid before the House, those members who so greatly tremble now for the rights of the Protestant minority, will have an opportunity of protecting that minority, they may then urge their reasons and insist that the Protestant shall not be placed in a position of the slightest danger.

Then, at that period of time, those who foresaw that there might be a possibility of disturbance or trouble in the local legislatures, pointed out the remedy which has been adopted by the present Government, as being the remedy that would apply for the protection of the minority :

But even granting that the Protestants were wronged by the local legislature of Lower Canada, could they not avail themselves of the protection of the federal legislature. And would not the Federal Government exercise strict surveillance over the action of the local legislatures in these matters. This would be protected by the vigilance of the Federal Government, which will never permit the minority of our portion of the confederation to be oppressed by the majority.

Now, Sir, these quotations which I have made show that the idea which permeated the minds of the men who banded together for the purpose of building up confederation, was that the minorities must be protected in so far as their religious interests were concerned, and that, if these interests were not sufficiently protected by the local legislatures, then their remedy would be to appeal before the Federal Parliament. I take great pleasure in quoting from the speech of Sir Richard Cartwright upon confederation. Of course, I need not say that this speech is remarkable for its elegance of diction, and for the views set forth.

An hon. MEMBER. Hear, hear.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. I say so, and I think when I have read it, the hon. gentleman will agree with me.

Mr. SOMERVILLE. We agree with you now.

Sir ADOLPHE CARON. Sir Richard Cartwright made the following reference to the protection of minorities :—

All I hope is that in adjusting our new constitution, local and general, we shall not allow our minds to be warped by antiquated notions of the dangers which threaten liberty. * * * While it is true, that here as elsewhere, there are always dangers enough to retard our progress, I think that every true reformer, every real friend of liberty will agree with me in saying, that if we must erect safeguards they should be rather for the security of the individual than of the mass, and that our chiefest care must be to train the majority to respect the rights of the minority, to prevent the claims of the few from being trampled under foot by the caprice or passion of the many.

I think that the hon. gentleman (Sir Richard Cartwright) at that period in his useful career, was absolutely correct, and I take pleasure in quoting the views he expressed then, as a strong indication that the views entertained by those who believe that minorities must be protected at all hazards, are the proper views to be entertained. I quote now from the Hon. George Brown, the leader of the Reform party, who, in 1865 described the situation as it was then. I quote from the confederation debates, page 85 :

WHY UNION TOOK PLACE.

Here is a people composed of two distinct races, speaking different languages, with religious and social and municipal and educational institutions totally different. With sectional hostilities of such a character as to render government for many years well nigh impossible, and yet, Sir, here we sit patiently and temperately discussing how these great evils and hostilities can be justly and amicably swept away for ever. We are endeavouring to adjust harmoniously greater difficulties than have plunged other countries into all the horrors of civil war.

Hon. George Brown goes on to express his views as to the rights of minorities protected in perpetuity. After quoting the proposal concerning the rights and privileges which the Protestant or Catholic minority in both Canadas possessed as to their denominational schools at the time when the union would go into operation. Mr. Brown said :

I admit that from my point of view this is a blot upon the scheme before the House. It is confessedly one of concessions from our side that have to be made, to secure this great measure of reform.

But it is urged that though this arrangement might perhaps be vain as regards Upper Canada, it is not so as regards Lower Canada, for there were matters of which the British population have long complained, and some amendments to the existing School Act were required to secure them equal justice. Well, when this point was raised, gentlemen of all parties in Lower Canada at once expressed themselves prepared to treat it in a frank and conciliatory manner with a view to removing any injustice that might be shown to exist.