

ABSTRACT FROM ADDRESS BY HON. W. M. MARTIN Premier of Saskatchewan and Minister of Education AT PUBLIC MEETING, SASKATOON, MAY 14, 1921

Supporters of the Martin government in Saskatoon met in nominating convention in the Labor Temple, Saskatoon, on Saturday afternoon, May 14th, and unanimously elected M. J. Cameron, the present representative in the Saskatchewan legislature, to be their candidate at the forthcoming provincial election. The Hon. W. M. Martin, premier of the Province, who was present at the convention in a comprehensive speech dealt with the most vital questions of the hour. His lucid exposition of the Separate School question is really worth reading and remembering. The Saskatoon Daily Star, though it chronicled the proceeding and gave an extract of the premier's speech, including the Separate School question, in its city edition, did not see fit to inform its subscribers in the country of what Mr. Martin said about this much discussed question, which is continually agitating the Orangemen. THE SEPARATE SCHOOL QUESTION. What prompted the Star to withhold this information from its country subscribers? Ed.

It is a matter of great regret to me that an effort is again being made to create an issue over the school question. A discussion of this question always causes racial and religious prejudices to arise and I had hoped during the past few years that it would not be necessary again to deal with the subject in public addresses. In this hope I have apparently been disappointed for it appears that there are still a number of our people who desire to raise the issue again. Those who feel so disposed are entitled to their opinions and I am prepared to debate the subject with them but I would much prefer it if they would come out into the open in order that the public might see who they are and not adopt the submarine method of warfare which has been used in this connection in the Province during the past few months.

There have always been school questions in Canada; in fact such questions have been a curse to the country. A very interesting statement appeared very recently in the press written by Hon. T. A. Cramer, Leader of the National Progressive Party in the House of Commons. That statement is as follows:

"No country needs for its successful welding into a true nation such a measure of mutual toleration among its different racial elements as this Canada of ours and no country has been so cursed in the past by cowardly and unprincipled appeals to racial passion and religious prejudice. As long as appeals to these vices were the staple currency of our political life, it was equally hopeless to dream of any sane discussion of our grave economic and social problems or any progress to decent national idealism. But happily that unpleasant atmosphere has either disappeared or is disappearing and it is not unlikely that the Canadian people will visit with prompt punishment such mischiefmakers as seek to revive it, for they have no greater enemy."

For my own part I have always felt that the only way to deal with such questions was to deal with them in a spirit of fairness and moderation for, otherwise, no settlement is possible. British policy for centuries has been one of fair treatment of minorities. In Canada the same course must be pursued; if it is not, I fear for the future of Canada, I fear for the future of my own province.

The history of separate schools in Canada dates back to pre-Confederation days and the question was of such importance in the negotiations leading up to Confederation that those who were responsible for the drafting of the British North America Act put in the law section 93, a portion of which is as follows:

"In and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to education subject and according to the following provisions:

1. Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools which any class of persons have by law in the Province at the Union.
2. All the powers, privileges and duties at the Union by law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the separate schools and School Trustees of the Queen's Roman Catholic subjects shall be and the same are hereby extended to the dissentient schools of the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic subjects in Quebec.
3. Where in any Province a system of separate or dissentient schools exists by law at the Union or is thereafter established by the Legislature of the Province an appeal shall lie to the Governor General in Council from any act or decision of any provincial authority affecting any right or privilege of the Protestant or Roman Catholic minority of the Queen's subjects in relation to education."

I need not tell you that the reason for the existence of this section was not only the protection of the rights possessed by the Catholic minority in the Province of Ontario, but also for the purpose of the protection of the Protestant minority in the Province of Quebec, whose representatives were most insistent that they should have the same privileges bestowed on them as the Catholic minority enjoyed in the Province of Ontario. Without this Section, the Confederation would not have been possible, and the leading men in Canada at that time of all political persuasions were prepared in the interests of the whole of Canada to reach a conclusion which would be fair to both the Protestant minority in Quebec and the Catholic minority in the Province of Ontario.

In 1905, Saskatchewan and Alberta were made provinces by acts passed by the Dominion Parliament under powers conferred on that parliament by the British North America Act of 1871, Section 2 of which is as follows:

"The Parliament of Canada may from time to time establish new provinces in any territories forming for the time being part of the Dominion of Canada but not included in any province thereof and may at the time of such establishment make provisions for the constitution and administration of any such province and for the passing of laws for the peace, order and good government of such province and for its representation in the said Parliament."

The Saskatchewan Act made provision for the Constitution of Saskatchewan, for the Administration of the Province, and for the passing of laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Province and Section 17 of the Act provides:

"Section 93 of The British North America Act 1867 shall apply to the said province with the substitution for paragraph (1) of the said section 93 of the following paragraph:

- (1) Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to separate schools which any class of persons have at the date of the passing of this Act, under the terms of Chapters 29 and 30 of the Ordinance of

the North-West Territories passed in the year 1901 or with respect to religious instruction in any public or separate school as provided for in the said Ordinances.

(2) In the appropriation by the Legislature or distribution by the Government of the Province of any moneys for the support of schools organized and carried on in accordance with the said chapter 29 or any act passed in amendment thereof or in substitution thereof there shall be no discrimination against schools of any class described in the said chapter 29."

The effect of this section is to continue in force whatever rights the minority, whether Catholic or Protestant, possesses under the provisions of Chapters 29 and 30 of the Ordinances of the North-West Territories passed in the year 1901, privileges which had been in force in Territorial days for many years, providing for the establishment of separate schools, whether Catholic or Protestant, and I think I may say the system in Territorial days operated very satisfactorily, and, in the judgment of the Parliament of Canada, in 1905, the enactment constituted a happy solution of a vexed question.

(To be continued.)

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