

Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen desire to educate their children apart they should be permitted to apply their taxes to that purpose, until they themselves realized the advantages of public education. But of course, the question that comes before us here is a constitutional one, and it is from the broader stand-point we have to judge it. So far as the liberality of the people of Manitoba is concerned I do not think that it can be questioned. They did not pass their school law for the purpose of injuring any of their fellow citizens. They are peculiarly placed. Their population is very sparse. Every man owns from one hundred and sixty to three hundred and twenty acres of land, the odd sections are vacant and the distances between houses is great, in consequence; the object of the school law was to reduce the burden of taxation to the lowest limit and enable the people to educate their children, by making ratepayers of all denominations to contribute alike. At the same time, they have altered the law upon which school matters rest and created what is called a national system of education. That is to say, that all education will be under the state, but without separating religion from education. Well, that is an experiment they are trying, which may not last for all time or may be perpetual. Roman Catholics of New Brunswick petitioned against a similar law. They expressed a desire to retain the separate schools and petitioned against the legislation of the local legislature, which, however, was declared to be constitutional. You do not hear Roman Catholics of New Brunswick now expressing any desire to change the present system. The people of Manitoba, said if that is the case in New Brunswick, it is quite possible that the experiment may produce beneficial results to the whole population in our province, and in the end all may unite in admitting that it is the best way. If, on the other hand our French Canadian fellow-countrymen feel that it is an injustice to them, all they have to do is to press the matter in local contests and attract their fellow-countrymen from the province of Quebec to help them and in that way without any aid from the central Government they will be able to accomplish all that they desire in a constitutional and self-reliant way. It would be very unwise for the Government at Ottawa to attempt to restrict the power of the people of Manitoba to legislate in their

own school matters as they see best for themselves. It would be most unwise for us to interfere with the constitutional liberty of the provinces, as they exist or new provinces as they may exist in the future. The constitutional liberty of the people of Canada is the dearest heritage that we can hand down unimpaired to future generations. Constitutional precedent is the principle on which our constitutions are based and we should be cautious how we establish any precedent which may be construed in the future as a restriction of the liberties of the people to carry out the Canadian Confederation and to build up a Canadian nationality on this continent on the safe and sound principles of constitutional liberty in every part. That is my view of the position so far as the school question is concerned. I recognize the fact that in 1869, before the North-west country was transferred to Canada by the British Crown, there was an uprising of the people in the Red River settlement because their rights had not been adjudicated upon before the country was transferred. A delegation was invited from Manitoba to visit Ottawa and arrange the terms upon which the province should be added to the Confederation. The delegation had a conference with the Government and the result was that a small province, I believe only sixty miles from north to south and one hundred from east to west was created, and I believe it was the intention of the Government at that time and of the delegation that interviewed the Government, to erect such barriers that the existing population there would be protected in the same manner of conducting their schools as had prevailed before Canada assumed control of that country. I believe that was fairly and honestly the intention between the two parties—that the one desired and the other intended to convey it. However, an appeal to the highest constitutional authority in the Empire has decided that so far as the province of Manitoba itself is concerned, it possesses a perfectly constitutional right to legislate on school matters in accordance with the views of the majority of the people. Therefore, if it is still felt by our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen in the province of Manitoba that an injustice has been done them by the legislation, to the extent that they may be deprived of public money by that legislation in the separate school in those settlements that existed at the time that this compact was