

Too Late. What silence we keep year after year... We live beside each other day by day...

HON. C. F. FRASER'S SPEECH ON THE SEPARATE SCHOOL QUESTION.

The Conservative Party and the Roman Catholic Vote.

The following is a report of the speech delivered on Tuesday evening, March 25th, 1890, in the Legislative Assembly, by Hon. C. F. Fraser, Commissioner of Public Works...

Hon. Mr. Fraser followed close upon Mr. Meredith, and was received with hearty applause as he rose. Mr. Meredith, he said, had started out all right apparently, but had not gone far before it was manifest that whatever else his intention was, he was bent on making an appeal to a certain class in this Province which might possibly side him over to the Government side of the House...

which was intended to accomplish the abolition of Separate schools. So they had better see now where they were, what Separate schools really meant, what principle was involved in them, how their supporters might or might not be concerned, and what the school law provisions were...

IN DESTROYING THE RIGHTS AND privileges now enjoyed by law in respect of Separate schools, would be to compel those of the Roman Catholic religion—just as they were being compelled across the lines—to pay the support of Public schools to which they could not conscientiously send their children, and to all intents and purposes, would be the same as the Separate schools of to-day. He told the hon. gentleman, with respect to the 300,000 people of this Province forming its religious minority, who were concerned in this question of Separate schools from the standpoint of their religion, and to whom it was a matter of conscience—who, when they aided in supporting Separate schools were but doing that which their faith and religious belief required them to do—he told him that, should they ever repeal these provisions,

so that there would no longer be a Separate School Act, there was not a single Roman Catholic Separate school that would the day thereafter be closed, and they could not be closed under any law. Now, he would point out where the cardinal point of the whole school law of this Province was to be found. It was found in a couple of sections of the Public Schools Act. They were usually known as the compulsory sections. Sections 209 and 210 of the Public Schools Act were the only sections under which, by any law of this Province hitherto passed or now in operation, any parent or guardian of a child was compelled to send the child to school at all. They could take the parent's or guardian's rates or taxes, and compel them, whether poor or rich, to pay towards the support of a school, but under those two sections, which formed the

CORNER-STONES OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM, and which directed whether a parent or guardian might or might not choose to send the child to any particular school. Section 209 said: "The parent or guardian of every child, not less than seven years nor more than thirteen years of age, is required to cause such child to attend a Public school, or any other school in which elementary instruction is given, for the period of 100 days in each Public school year, unless there be some reasonable excuse for non-attendance." So that the parent or guardian was not bound by any law that was in existence now to send his child to any particular school, and they could not in this Province enforce any law to compel the parents to do so, because intelligent Protestants would not have regard to their own proper privileges and liberties as parents, permit the enactment of such a law. Therefore, it was only under this clause that there was any compulsion, and this clause applied only to children between seven and thirteen years of age, and under it the child might be sent to any school whatsoever where elementary instruction was given. The next clause proceeded: "A child shall not be required to attend a Public school if such child is under efficient elementary instruction in some other manner, or if such child has been prevented attending school by sickness or other unavoidable cause, or if there is no Public school within two miles, measured according to the nearest road, from the residence of such child, if under the age of nine, and within three miles if over that age." So, he said again, that when people talked about abolishing Separate schools, when it was said that the hon. member for London looking to that end, he told them that if the day ever came when that decision would be reached by the Legislature, if they ever put the people of the minority in the same position as they found themselves in the State of New York, where, being compelled to pay towards the Public schools, they at the same time voluntarily, because of a religious faith, had established schools of their own—he said to them ahead of time, if ever that time did come, if ever such a law was brought into operation, it would be the stealing—for he could not use any other phrase—from the Roman Catholic minority money for the support of schools to which they could not conscientiously send their children. What else could it be? Under a compact, as he would like to see that compact, as entered by the old Province of Upper Canada, first formulated by conference, then ratified by the people, ratified by the Imperial Parliament and the Parliament of Canada, the pledged faith of the whole people of this country was given that the minority should be allowed to retain their Separate schools, and why should they be jeopardized when they had done nothing to deserve the jeopardizing of them? What had they done? He should like to ask the hon. gentleman. There were those who said the pupils were inferior. But where were they inferior, or how? In what line of life was it? The Separate schools of this Province were fifty years old. They had been guaranteed to the minority now by the British North America Act for quite a quarter of a century. He would like to see that clause in the graduates were afraid to face the majority of their fellowmen in this Province of Ontario? He thought that was the best test of what the system was doing. They might assert mere theories and say the Separate school teachers had not certificates, but the practical and beneficial fruits of the Separate school system were seen in every walk of life, and, comparing the position of the Separate school minority with that of twenty-five years ago, their position had distinctly advanced. Take the bar, take the pulpit, take the bench, take the merchant's desk, taking any rank or walk of citizenship, and, bearing in mind their proportion and numbers, would not those educated in Separate schools be found

TO BE THE EQUALS OF THOSE who were presumed to be better educated because they came from Public schools? He did not say they were any better. It was not because they said they were any better that they maintained these schools, but because they believed that their young children growing up should be educated day by day in their religion. What were they doing in the United States? There were nearly a million of the Roman Catholic children attending what are called Parochial schools, and these were supported out of the pockets of the Roman Catholic ratepayers, who had to pay besides towards supporting the other common or Public schools of the country. And these parochial schools were increasing, and only recently there had been a more energetic move in the direction of increasing them in face of the fact that those who supported them had to pay two rates. Now, in face of this, when they were pledged to this system, when it was doing no harm and educating the pupils just as fairly as the Public school system, when the graduates were in all respects the equals of their fellows from the Public schools, what pretext could there be for the abolition of the Separate school system unless it was to steal a piper from the minority? There could be no possible end gained, save this, and one had but to glance at what was going on in the United States to-day to find abundant proof for his assertion. There, where they had no Separate school law at all, the Roman Catholics were carrying on their own system of education, and the same thing would occur here. Did they think the Roman Catholic min-

ority were going to be such meek, or make of themselves such paltry cowards as they would be, if, under such provocation, they would be found submitting to that which was contrary to their conscience and faith and religion? Now, so far as the general question was concerned, it was sometimes asked by those who claimed to belong to the "Equal Rights" party, "Why should the Roman Catholics have any rights which we have not?" He did not read the law as saying that Protestants could not establish Separate schools. He read quite the contrary. As a matter of fact there were nine

PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOLS in this Province, and, as he read the law, they could be established in every city, town and village to-morrow, and established by far more easy methods as to control, as to the giving of notice and as to all that concerned the machinery of the schools, than could the Roman Catholic Separate schools. He would quote from the Protestant Separate School Act on this point, because they had heard it stated that there was no such thing as power to establish Protestant Separate schools except under certain exceptional circumstances. Section 1 of this Act said: "Upon the application in writing of five or more heads of families resident in any township, city, town or incorporated village, or of the Council of such township or the Board of School Trustees of any such city, town or incorporated village, shall authorize the establishment therein of one or more Separate schools for Protestants; and upon the application of five or more heads of families resident in any township, city, town or incorporated village, being colored people, and in every such case such Council or Board, as the case may be, shall prescribe the limits of the section or sections of such township." The hon. gentleman read on to the 6th and 7th sections without intermission, and he said in his own words: "In any city or town the persons who made application, according to the provisions of section 2 of this Act, may have a Separate school in each ward or in two or more wards united, as the said persons may judge expedient." Then the 7th: "No Protestant Separate school shall be allowed in any school section, except when the teacher of the Public school in such section is a Roman Catholic." He then remarked that this was the only restriction contained throughout the Act as to the general power.

Mr. Meredith—Hear, hear. Mr. Fraser said his hon. friend said "hear, hear," but this restriction only applied to the case of rural school sections, not to the case of cities, towns and villages, and there might have been very good reasons for this. "In any city or town the persons who made application, according to the provisions of section 2 of this Act, may have a Separate school in each ward or in two or more wards united, as the said persons may judge expedient." Then the 7th: "No Protestant Separate school shall be allowed in any school section, except when the teacher of the Public school in such section is a Roman Catholic." He then remarked that this was the only restriction contained throughout the Act as to the general power.

Mr. Meredith—That is a condition also. There is no such condition in regard to the Roman Catholic Separate schools. Mr. Fraser—No, but this is more liberal. It does not require any notice. I am pointing out that there is no more technically put in the way of Protestant Separate school supporters. Mr. Fraser went on into the matter of school-house taxes too prone to say the Catholics obtained too much; yet, even under this Liberal Government, desirous as they have been to do what was right by the Roman Catholics, they had not been able to do it, simply because the underlying influences had been against them. The next movement of any consequence among the Roman Catholics took place after the election of 1871. The taking into the Government of Mr. Scott, as Commissioner of Crown Lands, was looked upon by a large section as a certain cessation to what they were asking. In consequence, a still further deviation from the ranks of hon. gentlemen opposite took place. Later on came the platform laid down by the Orangemen of this Province. In the Grand Lodge of Western Ontario that met at Hamilton in 1876, a political platform was adopted, which is quoted in another part of this report. He asked them, in the face of that platform, adopted by those who formed the strength of the Conservative party then as they did to-day, what might any intelligent Catholic be expected to do except to leave that party. In 1879, therefore, by reason of that platform, more left the ranks of the Conservative party a large body of Catholics, who joined the Liberal party and had remained with it ever since. But they did not all leave, not even then. There were then probably retained more than one-half the Roman Catholics following the hon. gentleman opposite. In order to see whether their separation from him had come about by perfectly natural stages, he proposed to take the returns of the general elections of 1879 and 1883 and 1886. There were

such statute as the one he had quoted he had for a long time been unable to understand why in the larger centers, for example in the City of Toronto, where the schools were practically unaltered—there had not been more religious education imparted. There was no reason why there should not be. If there was all the tendency towards union of the Protestant denominations which it was stated there was, would it not be possible where there were no Roman Catholic pupils, and where the children of various Protestant denominations were together, that there should be more religious education, and that it could be agreed upon. One could not if he would, nor dare not if he could, close his eyes to the fact that agnosticism and atheism were spreading a great deal in the world, and that these did not come from the farm, the hamlet or the township, but from the great centers of the population; and would it not be a good thing, instead of trying to abolish Separate schools, if the Christian Churches of this Province, where they have the opportunity, without any demer being made, were to introduce into these Public schools more of the religious teaching which in the end might save a great many from drifting from Christianity into the paths of agnosticism or atheism, or any of the other lams to which he has referred? The speaker next proceeded to give the reasons why the Opposition leader had entered upon this crusade against Separate schools. He did not think he needed to go further than his friend's London speech to find the reason. The hon. gentleman had been in this chamber during the time that all these various amendments had been made. If there was anything that his friends boasted of more than another, it was that there was not a single item of legislation that his eye had not scanned; that he was there to put the dots over the 'i's and the crosses over the 't's; that he never failed to unearth and detect anything that was of doubtful or improper tendency, and that any particular provision that required mending he invariably put right. Now, it must be a very great humiliation to him to be compelled to practically say that these Separate school amendments had passed through the House without his discovering anything wrong or improper or unfair in them. He (Mr. Fraser) thought he found the reason for his (Mr. Meredith's) position now in what he had referred to to-day as

"the 'sheep' vote." And that, as the Roman Catholics were against him and in favor of the Liberal Government of Ontario, he had nothing to gain from that part of the electorate, and could afford to take such a course as would give him increased support from Protestant recruits. He (Mr. Fraser) denied that there was any such thing, or ever had been such a thing, as a solid Roman Catholic vote in this Province or in this constituency. Even the clergy were divided, and there had never been a time during which the Roman Catholic vote for any party or parties had been solid or nearly solid. Not only the laity were divided, but the clergy were divided in their politics, and the Bishops also, just as they had a right to be. There were some features of the political history of the Province, so far as the concerned Roman Catholics, which the leader of the Opposition seemed to have forgotten, and he begged to remind him of them. In the old days the Catholics were found supporting Baldwin and the Liberals of that time with an approach almost to unanimity, and to day the Roman Catholic allegiance to the Liberal party would have been about as it was then had it not been for this Separate School question. It was well known that immediately prior to Confederation they were with the Conservative party. How did they come into Confederation? They came in with the Separate school system guaranteed, and when, according to the then views of the Conservative leaders, the old political parties disbanded, and the political slate was clean. Next he referred to the calling of a Roman Catholic convention in the City of Toronto, which was a movement prompted largely by the illiberal way in which the Conservative leaders had treated the Roman Catholic laity in the matter not alone of the distribution of the public patronage, but also as respected representation in Parliament. His hon. friend told him that the Roman Catholics had a right to aspire. Yes, they had a right to aspire, but it sounded well on the platform, it went well at a convention, had a very nice ring about it, but there was a great unwritten law that "blood is thicker than water," and where it was a matter of competition for a particular post it would be found that in the end there were not many offices for those

WHO FORMED A RELIGIOUS MINORITY. Friends of the hon. gentleman, when they went out into the back school-house were too prone to say the Catholics obtained too much; yet, even under this Liberal Government, desirous as they have been to do what was right by the Roman Catholics, they had not been able to do it, simply because the underlying influences had been against them. The next movement of any consequence among the Roman Catholics took place after the election of 1871. The taking into the Government of Mr. Scott, as Commissioner of Crown Lands, was looked upon by a large section as a certain cessation to what they were asking. In consequence, a still further deviation from the ranks of hon. gentlemen opposite took place. Later on came the platform laid down by the Orangemen of this Province. In the Grand Lodge of Western Ontario that met at Hamilton in 1876, a political platform was adopted, which is quoted in another part of this report. He asked them, in the face of that platform, adopted by those who formed the strength of the Conservative party then as they did to-day, what might any intelligent Catholic be expected to do except to leave that party. In 1879, therefore, by reason of that platform, more left the ranks of the Conservative party a large body of Catholics, who joined the Liberal party and had remained with it ever since. But they did not all leave, not even then. There were then probably retained more than one-half the Roman Catholics following the hon. gentleman opposite. In order to see whether their separation from him had come about by perfectly natural stages, he proposed to take the returns of the general elections of 1879 and 1883 and 1886. There were

in this Province constituencies in which the Roman Catholic vote was either in the majority or nearly so, and others in which they formed a very large proportion of the electorate, and he intended to take these constituencies to demonstrate that in the election of 1879, even after these amendments, the hon. gentleman had as nearly as might be one-half the Catholic vote. In Dundas his supporter was elected (Mr. Broder). The Roman Catholic vote in that constituency was a large one, and they largely supported him then and still support him, though not in such numbers now as they did in the election of 1879. How could they be expected to do so now, when, as it would seem the

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION THOUGHT his only chance of success lay in driving out the Catholics from his party in the hope that he might gather in sufficient others to compensate him, or more than compensate him, for their loss. His policy was one of desperation. Having failed at all other points, this last chance was to be taken. Then Mr. Fraser returned to a review of the results of the election of 1879. He showed how in Essex North, in Guelph, in Huron East, in Lanark, in Ottawa, in Peterborough West, in Prescott, in Russell, in Stormont, in Essex North, Mr. White was defeated by Mr. Pacaud, but Mr. White received the vote of his co-religionists. Mr. White, by the way, Mr. Fraser pointed out, was the particular Roman Catholic who was taken round to the various constituencies to straighten things out. MR. MEREDITH WAS ASSEMBLED at this time to show any more than his boots and spurs, and he didn't want to risk too much on them; so, while he was doing all he could to increase the number of his Protestant supporters, Mr. White was sent around to try and keep the Roman Catholics together. Mr. Fraser then repeated the story of how, while he was going round in this way, Mr. White happened to get into a church one day while a service was on, and, upon the kneeling of the congregation, Mr. White had knelt, too, and the prayer happened to be for the success of Mr. White's opponents. Mr. White, no doubt, prayed as heartily as anybody, and his prayer was answered, for his opponents were successful. After that let nobody doubt the efficacy of prayer, said Mr. Fraser. The hon. Commissioner recounted the story of how, in 1886, a good share of the Roman Catholic vote. When he came to Kent, he remarked that his hon. friend, Mr. Clancy, a Roman Catholic himself, had been still returned for that constituency. Mr. Clancy broke in with, "Yes, in spite of you." Mr. Fraser said, "I was on my back on a sick bed at the time, I don't see how the hon. gentleman can say in spite of me. If I had been able to do anything I might have succeeded in reducing his two or three of a majority so much that he would not have got back here at all." Mr. Fraser proceeded to show that even at the election of '86 he could point to fifteen or twenty constituencies in the Province where the Roman Catholic vote was largest, and demonstrate that that vote had not been influenced either one way or the other by the Roman hierarchy. The Roman Catholic minority were not slaves or bondmen in the exercise of their franchise. They voted as independently as the Protestants. It was an insult, and an offensive insult, to say they did otherwise. They did not require the ballot to protect them. No doubt in some constituencies the Roman Catholic vote was exceeded their influence, just as many of the Protestant clergy had done. He did not bear very much said against the political sermons that were preached from Protestant pulpits on behalf of the Conservatives so frequently, but if the Roman Catholic priests had done the like the Orangegods would be blue with denunciation. The Roman Catholic clergy had the same rights as the Protestant clergy. He was not protesting against the use of the Protestant clergy just their right to. Ministers and priests had the right to use their influence just as other men did. He knew no reason why they should not be permitted to express their opinion just as other men did. Yet Mr. Meredith, only in his recent London speech, had taken a slash at Archbishop Cleary for using his influence, and had carefully refrained from mentioning the Protestant clergymen who had preached sermons on his behalf in London pulpits on a certain Sunday shortly preceding the last general election. Mr. Meredith said he had never even heard of them. Mr. Fraser said they were reported in the press at all events, and must have been delivered. No doubt priests of the Roman Catholic minority had exercised their right similarly. They would have no right to do so. Many of them had used their influence against hon. gentlemen opposite. How could they have expected them to do otherwise when the conflict came to what it was in 1886, or still more, what it had come to now, when it had become a "battle of the schools," as it had been styled the other day by the hon. member for Toronto (Mr. H. E. Clarke), an hon. gentleman whom he supposed would be one of those likely to form a Government if they were returned to power? He (Mr. Clarke) had said that Separate schools would have to be tolerated until the Legislature got the power to abolish them. There was no reason then for Roman Catholic clergy acting otherwise than they had done. Accused as they were from religious belief, they would be traitors to their Church if they did; were to their own conscientious convictions and to the Church of which they were priests and ministers if they did not, so far as lay in their power, seek to prevent the

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power he would be at the mercy of those who formed the strongest part, the very backbone of his political party. Brother Wm. Bell had told them that he intended mounting the Protestant horse.

EVERYBODY WHO COULD understand the English language understood from what had been announced that Mr. Meredith was prepared to vote for such an amendment to the Constitution as would give to the Legislature the right to deal with Separate schools, and if this power were obtained by him there could be no doubt, after what he had said there that night that he could not, if he wished to be considered an honest man, do otherwise than endeavor to abolish Separate schools. But even in 1886, in spite of all that had been said, and with as much that could be read between the lines of his manifesto that year, with the evident tendency of the statements made on his behalf through the country by his candidates, still there was no solid Roman Catholic vote in the Province of Ontario. Mr. Meredith had not so large a share of it as before, but even with things as they were, with his evident antagonism to the Roman Catholic minority of this Province, there were still thousands of Roman Catholic votes cast for him through Ontario. In Essex North, Mr. White was defeated by Mr. Pacaud, but Mr. White received the vote of his co-religionists. Mr. White, by the way, Mr. Fraser pointed out, was the particular Roman Catholic who was taken round to the various constituencies to straighten things out.

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