

April 29, 1872

Mr. COSTIGAN said that the member for Gloucester (Hon. Mr. Anglin) had in his opinion honestly, fairly, and independently, represented the views of the Roman Catholics of New Brunswick, and he thought he might also say of a very large portion of the Protestants. It was unfortunate when questions came before Parliament which provoked religious discussions, but this question did not necessarily do so. It was not a question of the Catholics trying to overcome the Protestant influence, it was simply a right that they felt entitled to that they tried to protect. It was a right that they had long enjoyed and felt grieved that it was taken from them. If their wishes had been carried out it would not have affected the Protestants in any way. As to the constitutionality of the measure, there was but one feeling throughout the Province and that was that the act of the Local Legislature was in direct violation to the Constitution.

It had been said that there was no law in New Brunswick by which separate schools were in existence. He contended that such laws had existed, under which Catholic schools were established and maintained by annual vote of the Legislature, and similar grants were voted for schools of all denominations. Under these laws Catholics were in a position to establish schools and employ Catholic teachers and could call upon the Government to pay their teachers out of the public funds, and that right would now exist but for the measure complained of. He could not understand how the argument could be used that they enjoyed no privileges by law in that country. It was true there was no law such as those in Ontario and Quebec, specially providing for sectarian schools, but he contended that under the law they had Catholic and French schools which were kept up at the expense of the country.

The objection taken by the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Bellerose) he understood to be that, while in the Quebec resolutions the rights of Catholics in the different Provinces were guaranteed (and it was not then believed that these rights should exist by virtue of any law), the resolutions as altered at Westminster, provided that where separate schools existed by law at the union their rights should not be affected. As it was now contended that there was no law recognizing Catholic schools in New Brunswick it would almost seem those words had been put in for the purpose of working against the Catholics of New Brunswick.

It had been said by the Minister of Justice (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) that the Catholics of New Brunswick must from the position they occupy in that Province, be able to exercise sufficient influence on the legislation of the country to secure a Separate School law, and he had cited the success of the Catholics in Ontario. But it must be remembered that the minority in Upper Canada had the influence of 60 or 65 Catholics from Lower Canada to assist them. The Catholics of New Brunswick were not in such a position.

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER: The hon. gentleman will recollect that the Catholics were in a minority in the Parliament of Canada.

Mr. COSTIGAN: No doubt that was correct, but the difference was not so great as in New Brunswick, and they exercised more influence in the Canadian Parliament than the Catholics of New Brunswick can expect to exercise in their Legislature. He felt proud to see that spirit of liberality and fair play which the Catholic majority of Quebec displayed towards the Protestant minority in that Province. He considered that the action of the Legislature of New Brunswick was not in the interests of the country. It had already interfered with immigration and had been the cause of driving from his part of the country settlers both from the United States and from Quebec. If there was any possibility of disallowing the law—it should not, in the interests of the Province, have been allowed to exist. Before sitting down he felt it his duty to express on behalf of the Catholics of New Brunswick as well as himself his gratification at the sympathy, aid and encouragement they had received in the defence of their rights from liberal-minded Protestants in the Province. (*Applause.*)

Hon. Mr. ANGLIN said that what the Catholics had asked for was, that if the system of direct taxation was adopted, they should have the same rights that Protestants had in Quebec. In applying to the Dominion Government, they considered that as they were being deprived of rights which they had enjoyed under the old law, that Government might well interfere. He feared the Minister of Justice (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) and the Minister of Militia (Hon. Sir George-É. Cartier) were mistaken in saying that the Catholics were sure to succeed if they persevered; but they would never relinquish the fight, however desperate the fight might be.

Mr. PICKARD was entirely opposed to denomination grants, and was sorry to hear the Minister of Justice (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) advise that the matter should be taken to the polls, for it only caused ill feeling and hatred. He maintained that education should be carried more than at present into the country districts. He thought that if the whole people joined together to carry out the spirit of the law, it would be much better than the present opposition and hostility; and that the greatest good would be effected by non-denominational schools. The matter ought to have been left to New Brunswick, and not carried here.

Mr. COSTIGAN desired to repeat that in a mixed population schools might be sustained acceptable to all parties, but that where the population was entirely Catholic, they ought to have a Catholic school.

Mr. JOLY said the Province of Quebec had set an example in this matter which had been followed in Ontario and which he hoped would be followed in New Brunswick. If it were possible to have such a system of education as that proposed in New Brunswick, a system where all parties could be educated together, it would be the best system possible. But this was utterly impossible. Poor people, struggling for their living, had not much time to devote to education; however it ought to be endeavored to give them as much education as possible. As a Protestant he thought it his duty to help Catholics to have schools of their own as Protestants had.