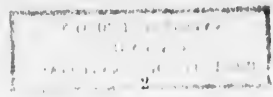


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honour of holding the dignified position of leader of the Liberal-Conservative party of Nova Scotia. (Applause.) What happened under the leadership of this unsuccessful politician? Before that session closed we divided 22 strong in opposition, and when the next session took place we turned out our opponents, and took our seats on the Treasury benches. (Applause.) So much for the history of the years 1855 and 1857. Well, gentlemen, at the first general election thereafter we were defeated. A question was raised, and raised by the "Morning Chronicle." You have only to turn to the pages of that sheet which now professes to be apprehensive that Catholics and Protestants are going to be set by the ears in this country, you have only to turn to the period when we were in power, from 1857 to 1860, to find the "Chronicle" of that day teeming with the vilest denunciations of Roman Catholics, and declaring as a cardinal principle of the Liberal party that no Roman Catholic should be permitted to hold a seat in the government of the country. I am glad to find that after the lapse of forty years, it now deprecates the possibility of such a catastrophe as that which they spent years in endeavouring to inflict on this country. Now, the reason why no such difficulty has presented itself since that time is that although we were defeated by a bare majority in the election of 1859 we had the opportunity of agitating the country from its centre to its circumference, with the result that although we fell in 1859, we did not fall until we had succeeded in planting upon the ramparts of the country the flag under which we had fought of equal rights and equal justice to all. (Loud applause.) Equal rights and equal justice to all without distinction of race or creed. We were so successful in the advocacy of these principles that we have converted even the "Morning Chronicle." What happened? We went into opposition, but we were not idle. We stood by our guns and maintained our principles with the result that the sober second thought of the country in 1863, gave us the most overwhelming majority that was ever known in any country relative to numbers. We had a majority of 25 out of a house of 55 members. I don't think that is an instance of the work of an unsuccessful politician. (Laughter and applause.) We took up great questions. We took up the vital question of the free common schools, and we had the pleasure of passing that law which the Hon. Mr. Fielding, on a recent occasion in the city of Montreal, declared to be the best school law ever enacted in any country in the world. (Applause.) And he only paid a just tribute to that great measure of legislation so vital to the well-being of the country, when he said that under that law Roman Catholics and Protestants had lived together in the most perfect harmony (that school bill for which the country was indebted to the party which I had the honour of

leading), and that bill was a model for legislation which might be followed by any country in the world. (Applause.) We took up another great question, one of the most vital, of great magnitude and importance,—we took up the question of uniting the isolated colonies of which British North America was composed into one great whole. And we accomplished that work. It is true that when we took up that question 'I was not without doubt and misgiving on the part of many leading public men. But we succeeded, and after spending ten months in London, in the years 1866 and 1867, when we were carrying through the Imperial Parliament the Act which federated British North America, I returned to find that under an agitation led by the most distinguished and most brilliant Nova Scotian who has ever lived, the late Hon. Joseph Howe, (loud applause) public sentiment had been so excited during the period that I was not here to fight the battle, that when we went to the elections in 1867 I found myself alone out of 19 members who were returned to the Dominion House of Commons from this province,—the only one returned who was not pledged to break up the federation. Gentlemen, I was not dismayed, for I have always felt that if you fall in a good cause you will soon rise again. (Applause.) Animated by that feeling I relied upon my judgment of what confederation would do for this province, as well as for the other provinces, for the vindication of the policy I had pursued. Although I stood alone, I did not relax my exertions. When before the elections I was offered a seat in the first Government of Canada,—and I may say in passing that that was formed—I did not take the seat offered me at that time because true to the policy, true to the principles that have guided me from the period of my first entrance into public life, down to the present time, I held that personal considerations were insignificant compared with the interests of the country. (Applause.) And finding that the interests of the country on that occasion would be better served by my standing aside, I withdrew and declined to accept the portfolio that was offered me, and asked that the late Hon. Sir Edward Kenny (applause), the president of the legislative council, should be appointed in my place. I then took my seat as a private member of the House, and determined to use all the powers I possessed towards securing the accomplishment of what I believe to be the greatest thing that could be accomplished, that was to secure the success of the great measure which was calculated to make out of these isolated provinces a great nation. (Applause.)

Again, after the election, I was offered a seat. The late Hon. Sir Adams Archibald being defeated, and I being the only one returned on the Conservative side, I was