

# The Catholic Register.

"Truth is Catholic; proclaim it ever, and God will effect the rest."—BALMEZ.

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## MR. COSTIGAN'S SPEECH

### An able Exposition of Confederation Arrangements.

SIR JOHN AND MR. MCCARTHY.

Mr. Speaker, I need not assure the House that I have no intention of answering the hon. gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. McCarthy) by any constitutional argument on this subject, to meet the arguments put forward by him. In rising at present I simply ask permission of the House, and of you, Mr. Speaker, to deal for a few moments with the subject from another point of view entirely—first, because I do not think that the line which the hon. member has followed was at all a proper line to take; and, secondly, because I do not think we have reached the stage when we are called upon to discuss the subject at any great length. I may say at the outset that while many of the speakers who have taken part in this debate have alluded to the reference made to this subject in the Speech from the Throne as one calculated to create strife and enmity in this country there is one consolation to every Canadian in this country who feels that he is represented in this Parliament—that this Parliament has time and again given proof of its ability to deal with the most delicate questions, and to deal with them in the most intelligent and satisfactory manner. We have had occasion before to discuss subjects which were calculated to create divisions and dissensions in our country that would have had consequences very serious to its peace, and I am sure that every member of this House will agree with me, on looking back at the record, those of us who have taken part in them can congratulate it upon the tone and the dignity that this Parliament has exhibited on all such occasions. Therefore, Sir, I feel confident that the remarks which I offer to-day will be received by my fellow-members in the spirit which I intend to deliver them. In the first place, I deny the right or the propriety of the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy) making the appeal which he has made in this House and in the country on the question of separate schools as against common schools because that question has not arisen. The whole question with which this Parliament has been or may be called to deal, the question with which the courts and the Privy Council have been called to deal, is not whether separate schools are to be established in Manitoba or not. They could not deal with such a question; they were not clothed with the power to deal with it. The whole question was: Have any rights under the constitution under which we live been taken away from any minority? And what has been the answer? The highest tribunal of the Empire has declared that certain rights have been taken away from a minority in one of the provinces. This is the whole subject, and not whether separate schools are better than common schools, or whether they should be forced on the people of Manitoba or not. But I want to take issue with the hon. gentleman on another point, and a more

serious one. I want to say in the name of the people for whom to some extent I have the right to speak, that it was a gross act of injustice to the Catholics of this country for the hon. member for North Simcoe, as well as certain newspapers and other prominent gentlemen, all through the time that the question has been under discussion, to inflame the public mind by trying to create the impression that the Catholics of this country have been the aggressors, and have attempted to force Catholic schools upon the country and to interfere with provincial rights. While I do not want to discuss the question, because the time has not yet come for discussing anything beyond the remedial order which has been passed let me say here that I fully agree with the hon. gentlemen who have preceded me in expressing the most earnest desire that the Legislature of Manitoba will afford the remedy to the evil created in that legislature by its own act, and that the matter may not be brought into this Parliament at all. I will not be so unkind as to suppose for one moment that any hon. gentleman in this House would feel disappointed at such a peaceable solution of the matter. I would not do so cruel a thing to any public man in the country as to charge him with entertaining the hope that Manitoba might not settle this question, and that it might come here to be settled by the Dominion Parliament, with the view of creating dissatisfaction and anxiety in the country. We all trust that the remedial order, having gone to the Manitoba Legislature, will be dealt with effectually by that body. We do not all insist, as did the hon. gentleman who last addressed the House, that the remedial order places that legislature in the position that they must pay the last pound of flesh. If the hon. gentleman were in a position to say that the Legislature of Manitoba had refused to take action and that this Parliament was called upon to do so—if he were in a position to say that the Legislature of Manitoba had offered any fair and reasonable compromise, with the object of restoring peace and harmony, and that the minority in that province had refused such a fair and reasonable compromise, his argument might have some weight. But I say that it is most unfair and most ungenerous to charge the Catholics of this country with the responsibility of this agitation. There must be a beginning of all things, and there must be reasons for the exceptional legislation to which we are obliged to refer, and out of which this question grows. Every hon. member of this House who is familiar with the history of Confederation and the circumstances under which Confederation was brought about, knows full well that it was not the Catholics of this country who insisted on this exceptional legislation.

We know that as a matter of history, as a matter of record, from the discussions which took place when the question of the agreement and the treaty between the different parties to the Confederation was under consideration. When that was being considered by the old Canadian Parliament, the Parliament of Upper and Lower Canada, what were the real facts? The Catholics did not say: You must give us certain rights and privileges and make them permanent by law or else we will not go into Confed-

eration. No; it was quite the other way. It was the Protestants, the leading men in Parliament at that time, men like the hon. George Brown, the Hon. Mr. Holton, Sir Alexander Galt—all the prominent men at the time—who insisted, as the first condition of Confederation, that the educational rights of the Protestant minority in Quebec should be protected and guaranteed. At that time the Protestant minority in the province of Quebec had certain rights though not so extensive as those they now have. The Catholic minority in Ontario had certain rights under the Bill of 1863, but more limited than those now enjoyed by the Protestant minority in Quebec. It was then declared by all these gentlemen I have named that before Confederation could take place at all, the Government must bring in a Bill dealing with the province of Quebec, and amending right there and then the school law as it then existed in that province. The Protestant leaders in Parliament were not content that the rights of the Protestant minority in Quebec as they then existed should be secured for Confederation. They said: That is not enough; we want perfect and full control of educational matters for our minority in Quebec, and unless you amend the law now so as to give us that full and complete control it will not be binding under the Act of Confederation. Therefore, that was done, and let me say to the credit of the people of Quebec, and their representative men, that no voice was raised during that discussion objecting in the slightest degree to the proposal. On the contrary, they said they were willing to give that, and any further guarantee which the minority might desire at the time. Then followed the proposition that if you gave to the minority in Quebec the protection they asked for on the educational question, why not give the same guarantee to the minority in Ontario? That was a fair proposition to make at a time when the prominent men of the country were assembled together to lay the foundations of a new nation by uniting provinces with different interests, speaking different languages, and believing different religions. The fair proposition was then made to give, on the other hand, the Catholic minority in Ontario similar rights. I am not going to find fault, I am not attempting to draw a comparison in an offensive sense between the Protestants and the Catholics at that time, but I simply state the facts as proving the position I have taken from the first—that the condition of things we have now is not chargeable to the Catholics at all, except in part, but is simply due to the movement made by the Protestants themselves to secure protection to their minority in Quebec. That was agreed to in the first place by the Finance Minister, Sir Alexander Galt, when he pledged himself to it in his speech at Sherbrooke. He was questioned in the House afterwards by the Hon. Mr. Holton, who said:

The Minister of Finance, in a speech at Sherbrooke, had promised that the Government would introduce a bill to amend the school laws of Lower Canada. The honorable gentleman must be aware that this was a question on which there was a great deal of feeling in this section of the province amongst the English-speaking, or the Protestant class, of the population. He did not like to introduce anything of a religious character into discussions of this House,

but in debating the great changes which it was proposed to effect in our system of government, the effect of them upon that class to which he referred must be considered. Among that class there was no phase or feature of these threatened changes which excited so much alarm as this very question of education. Well, the Minister of Finance had said, with great solemnity, as having the authority of his colleagues for it, that this session the Government would bring down amendments to the school laws of Lower Canada, which they proposed enacting into law before a change of Government should take place, and which would become a permanent settlement of the question.

That pledge was carried out. I may quote further what the Hon. Mr. Letellier de Saint Just said, and I do this merely to show the spirit in which this proposition was met by gentlemen representing different nationalities. He said:

I have heard it said that the Protestants of Lower Canada ought to be satisfied with their prospects for the future, because we have always acted with liberality towards them. But that is no guarantee for them, for we would not content ourselves with a mere promise to act liberally, if we considered that our interest or our institutions were threatened by a majority differing in race and religion from ourselves; and in any case that is not the way to ensure the peace of the country. If we establish this principle, we should say to the Catholics of Upper Canada that they ought to be satisfied with the lot which we provide for them. When we make a constitution, we must, in the first place, settle the political and religious questions which divide the population for whom the constitution is devised; because it is a well-known fact, that it is religious differences which have caused the greatest troubles and the greatest difficulties which have agitated the people in days gone by.

There were no two opinions on that subject, that, in the best interests of the country these things should be settled at once, so that friction might be avoided in the future. The Quebec representatives, having conceded the Protestant minority the right to so amend the then existing law as to give them full and complete control in the matter of education in the Province of Quebec. Mr. Bourassa, whom I am glad to see hale and hearty in his place to-day, moved an amendment to the effect that similar privileges should be extended to the Catholic minority in Ontario. That amendment, was, however, lost by a very large majority. Mr. D'Arcy McGee said that the Bill of 1863, which had been carried, conveyed to the Catholics of Ontario all that they had asked for in their petition, and he, for his part, had accepted that as a finality, and therefore would not ask to open up that question again, unless special and further privileges were granted to the Protestant minority in Quebec, in which case he thought the minority in Ontario ought to be protected in exactly the same way. Well, the vote was taken, and only a small vote was given in favor of the motion of Mr. Bourassa, showing

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