

Indeed, in one most important respect these Provincial Legislatures and Governments of ours have even a higher degree of autonomy or independence than those of the Dominion itself; for, by the act of the Imperial Parliament which created us and them, we are almost absolute masters of our constitution, and they are not, in any theoretical respect, masters of theirs. [Cheers.] Over anything and everything, save only what affects the position of the Lieutenant Governor, who, in Her Majesty's name, administers our Government, we have the power of dealing, with no other control than that which is nominally thrown over all our legislation. But, the Parliament of the Dominion cannot touch her constitution, without going to the Imperial Parliament for leave to do it. In that respect we are very far from being subordinate to them. We are not generally subordinate. The functions ascribed to us embrace the management of everything affecting the public lands or domain; almost everything that is to work for the material welfare of our people; the control almost unlimited of everything affecting our civil rights; the control over almost everything regarding the constitution of our courts; the absolute mastery over our municipal and educational institutions; the control over all manner of considerations of finance affecting all these large interests. Do not call all this municipal. It is just as important to the people that these functions be performed well, in a first-rate manner, by first-rate men, as it is that the other functions which devolve on the Government and Parliament of the Dominion should be well performed by them. [Loud cheers.] I do not know even whether it is not of more importance. There are many questions exclusively of our resort, which the bulk of our people feel closer to their hearts, which affect their interests and passions more intensely, than anything that can happen at Ottawa. The vibrations of our pulse are to be affected more in the years to come by what passes here than by what passes there. [Cheers.] If this proposition be true as regards all the Provinces, and I think it is, it is particularly true as regards the Province of Quebec. There is no doubt, whatever, as to this—that to a very great extent the Federative form impressed on our political institutions, has been due to the peculiar position of this Province of Quebec. We are here a people with many peculiarities and associations that separate us from the other Provinces: a division of language, a style of division as regards faith, that does not prevail elsewhere; and there are reasons in abundance why all of us—I care not to what language or faith we may be set down—should desire that as regards these questions we should be left to find the solution of all our own difficulties among ourselves. [Hearty cheering.] The new system has thrown us upon ourselves, and I, for one, am not sorry that it has. We may just as well admit the fact, and act upon it. The system has thrown us upon ourselves to conserve and harmonise the elements of society that exist in the Province of Quebec; and from our geographical position as regards the other Provinces, to exercise a similar conservative and harmonizing influence as respects their people and institutions. Whatever notions may prevail elsewhere in the Dominion as to the policy or propriety of efforts to change our system, either in one direction or the other, within the Province of Quebec, I feel satisfied no sound-thinking, well-meaning public man, with any pretension to call himself a statesman, can be slow to recognise the fact that it is not for us here to think of making them. I am particularly desirous to be understood as expressing myself emphatically on this point, it being