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WINNIPEG CONFERENCE

Suggestions of the Dominion Com-  
missioners for the Settlement  
of the School Difficulty.

Manitoba's Reply and Alternative  
Proposition—Will Remedy Any  
Well Founded Grievance.

Rejoinder of the Commission and  
Appeal for Reconsideration of  
the Provincial Decision.

The following official statements re-  
garding the proceedings of the Win-  
nipeg conference on the school question  
have been given for publication. The  
report begins with the

PROPOSALS OF THE DOMINION COM-  
MISSIONERS.

"Suggestions for settlement of Mani-  
toba school question from Dominion  
Commissioners for Manitoba govern-  
ment."

Legislation shall be passed at the present session of the Manitoba legislature to provide that in towns and villages where there are, or may hereafter be, five Roman Catholic children of school age, and in cities where there are fifty of such children, the board of trustees shall arrange that such children shall have a school or school room for their own use, where they may be taught by a Roman Catholic teacher; and Roman Catholic parents, or guardians, say ten in number, may appeal to the department of education from any decision or neglect of the board in respect of its duty under this clause, and the board shall observe and carry out all decisions and directions of the department on any such appeal.

Provision shall be made by this legislation that schools wherein the majority of children are Catholics shall be exempted from the requirements of the regulations as to the religious exercises. That text books be permitted in Catholic schools such as will not offend the religious views of the minority, and which from an educational standpoint shall be satisfactory to the advisory board.

Catholics to have representation on the advisory board.  
Catholics to have representation on the board of examiners appointed to examine teachers for certificates.  
It is also claimed that Catholics should have assistance in the maintenance of a Normal school for the education of their teachers.  
The existing system of permits to non-Catholic teachers in Catholic schools should be continued for say two years to enable them to qualify, and then to be entirely discontinued.  
In all other respects the schools at which Catholics tend to be public schools and subject to every provision of the education acts for the time being in force in Manitoba.

A written agreement having been arrived at and the necessary legislation passed the remedial bill was presented to parliament is to be withdrawn; and any rights and privileges which might be claimed by the minority in view of the decision of the judicial committee of the Privy Council on the above subject, the observance of such agreement remain in abeyance and be not further insisted upon."

MANITOBA'S REPLY.

Honorable Arthur R. Dickey, Minister of Education, Winnipeg, March 30, 1896.

Honorable Arthur R. Dickey, Sir Donald A. Smith, K. C. M. G.:

GENTLEMEN.—We have had under consideration the remedial bill which was presented to us on the 28th inst. containing your suggestions for settlement of the Manitoba school question, and have the honor to submit herewith our reply thereto.  
We desire, first, to refer to the understanding upon which the conference proceeded with you. You will remember that we thought it necessary before proceeding with the discussion of the question involved to stipulate:  
1. That while the conference was proceeding the remedial bill now before parliament should be held in abeyance, and no proceedings taken thereon in the meantime, provided that the conference does not extend beyond Tuesday next.  
2. That in the event of an agreement being reached for settlement, the remedial bill should be at once withdrawn, and the execution of the terms of the agreement left to the parties.  
These stipulations were agreed to by yourselves without hesitation, but notwithstanding such agreement, and in violation of its terms, the remedial bill was advanced a stage in the House of Commons on Saturday morning. While not desirous of taking any advantage of this departure from the conditions upon which the negotiations were opened, we deem it due to ourselves to protest against the course thus pursued by the government by which you were commissioned.

We regret that we are unable to accede to the terms of the proposition submitted to us. A study of its details reveals the fact that it involves much more than would appear at first sight. The objections are both general, that is to say, as to principles involved, and special, that is to say, as to practical operation.

An amendment to the school act embodying the terms of the memorandum would divide the population for educational purposes into two classes—Roman Catholics and Protestants—giving to the Roman Catholic population distinct and special privileges as against the remaining portion of the people. It would establish a system of state-supported separate schools for the Roman Catholic people, and would compel their support by the school taxes and legislative grants. Not only so, but the whole school organization—text book regulations, constitution of advisory board, board of examiners in Normal school—would be modified to bring it into accord with the separate principle to an extent not usual even in places where regularly constituted separate school systems obtain.  
In the order-in-council of the 20th of December, 1895, transmitted to the fed-

eral government, as embodying the views of the Manitoba government upon the question, it is stated that the proposal to establish a system of state-aided separate schools in any form cannot be agreed to. The order-in-council was taken as the basis of the policy of the government upon the question in the late general provincial election, and upon it the government was sustained. It is clear, therefore, that we are precluded from accepting the proposition which has been made. Such acceptance would, in our opinion, be a direct breach of faith with the people of our province.

Apart from the fundamental objection above stated, we think it due to you to state somewhat in detail a few of the practical objections to your proposals.  
As to the first clause:

1. Separate schools under this clause would result in a teacher having under his charge a comparatively small number of pupils of various ages and degrees of efficiency. The school could not, therefore, be properly graded, and could not attain the degree of efficiency reached by public schools in cities, towns and villages. Grading of classes and mutual competition would be destroyed. The separate school would, therefore, of necessity be inferior. Experience elsewhere will prove the truth of this contention.

2. The organization of the separate school would be compulsory. Neither the Roman Catholic parents nor the school trustees would have any option. The voluntary idea upon which, almost universally, school organization depends, and which rules even in Ontario, where there is a fully developed separate school system, is entirely eliminated. Given the requisite number of Roman Catholic children of school age, and the law would compel the separation without regard to the wishes of the parents or the trustees, and equally without regard to the ability of the district to maintain another school. It is most probable also that in such a case it would be held that the Roman Catholic children had no legal right to attend the public school. Thus we would by law compel Roman Catholics to separate themselves and deprive them of the right to send their children to the public schools. There seems to be no precedent even in separate school legislation for such a provision.

3. In many cases it would be impossible to provide a separate building, and the Roman Catholic children would therefore be assigned a room in the public school. It seems beyond dispute that nothing could be worse than the separation of children into two distinct bodies within daily view of each other.

4. The financial objections would be serious. A voluntary separate school system such as exists in Ontario, or such as we had in Manitoba prior to 1890 could only be put into operation where the Roman Catholic races accepting the legislative grant would be sufficient to maintain the school, but under the plan proposed this idea is not recognized. If the number of Roman Catholic children are to be found a school must be provided and maintained. By whom? By the public school trustees. The rates paid by the Roman Catholic tax-payers might be only one-tenth of the cost of the school, yet the rest of the district must maintain it. As a matter of fact in a great majority of cases in cities, towns and villages in Manitoba the contributions of the Roman Catholic ratepayers would only be a fraction of the cost of maintaining the school. As a result the bulk of the expense would require to be met by the taxes paid by non-Catholic ratepayers, and the school would therefore be an additional charge upon the school revenues, already in every case heavily burdened. It would be hard to conceive of a more indefensible and offensive method of compelling one portion of the people to pay for the education and sectarian religious training of the remainder, and to maintain a separate denominational school, to the principle of which they were opposed.

It is quite clear that such a plan would prove unworkable. The non-Catholic people would continually struggle against supporting what they would consider to be an unjust burden. The trustees elected would probably be in accord with the views of the majority and might prove hostile and refractory in carrying out the details of the scheme. Altogether it is clear that a most unhappy state of affairs would result. We believe there is no justification for substituting such an arrangement for that which now exists. At present in every city, town and village in the province, outside of Winnipeg and St. Boniface, the Roman Catholic children attend the public schools. Not a word of complaint is heard. Absolute contentment and satisfaction prevail. The children have the advantage of efficient instruction and numbers of them are qualifying themselves to become teachers in the public schools. We do not hesitate to say that not only is there no desire to separate, but if left to themselves, the Roman Catholic people, in the cities, towns and villages outside of Winnipeg and St. Boniface, would not consent to a change in the direction indicated.

5. It would be idle to say that such a plan would not impair the efficiency of the public schools. Such efficiency depends in the main upon the sufficiency of the school revenues. Given sufficient revenue, and the people under the stimulating action of the department may be depended upon to have a good school. The school taxes are now a heavy burden and one of the ever pressing questions in municipal finance is to decide how much the people can afford to pay for their schools. Subject a substantial sum such as would be necessary to maintain the separate schools, and nothing can be more certain than that a general lowering of the standard of efficiency of the public schools would result.

As to clause two:

1. The effects of this clause would be to absolutely divest the legislature and government of control of the schools so far as religious exercises and teaching are concerned. Where a majority of the pupils are Roman Catholics, doctrinal religious teaching without any restriction or control might go on at any hour, or at all hours. The schools might be in effect so far as religious teaching is concerned, church schools. It might be said that if religious teaching was carried on to the detriment of secular education, the department might withhold the grant. Even if this were done the school trustees would be compelled to carry on the school and the penalty would be suffered by the ratepayers.

Apart from that, however, the remedy is apparent rather than real. In actual administration we know from experience that it is most difficult to decide on the withholding of a grant on account of inefficiency. Repeated and troublesome inquiries have been made, conflicting opinions to be weighed, and in the end it is doubtful what course should be followed. Moreover the withholding of a grant from a separate Catholic school, established on the basis of a treaty settlement, would almost invariably be charged to be a violation of the spirit of the treaty.

Another feature of this clause is the effects on non-Catholic children. What would become of them while the religious education of the majority was proceeding? Under our present conscience clause there is no possibility of trouble to any class. In the memorandum there is no safeguard. We know by experience that in schools where there was a Protestant minority under the old system, most bitter complaints were made of the inability of the non-Catholic children to properly progress with their studies, owing to the time of the school being taken up with religious instruction. The same result would inevitably follow in an aggravated degree, instead of allowing different forms of the holding of religious exercises in every case where the Roman Catholic children were in the majority. It is our belief that in such cases the schools would be allowed to benefit the non-Catholic minority.

In view of the above remarks, it will be unnecessary to deal at length with the other proposals contained in the memorandum, as it is believed that they will therefore be confined to a brief space.  
As to text books.—It will be impracticable to provide by statute that the text books for the use of the Roman Catholic minority; but we have no doubt that, if other points could be agreed upon, an arrangement could be arrived at on the text book question which would be mutually satisfactory. We regard this part of the difficulty as comparatively easy of adjustment.

We would have no objection to the Catholic people being represented upon the advisory board, and the board of examiners, in separate schools, if the late Archbishop, was offered a seat on the advisory board. But we see no practical way of embodying such a provision in the statutes. The effect of such a provision would be that the boards would not be legally constituted without Catholic members, and the legal constitution of the board might be disturbed by the resignation of the Catholic members, or the refusal of the Catholic non-teacher office. This would also be impossible to give a statutory privilege of representation to one religious denomination without according the same privilege to others.  
We believe that it is impossible to assist a separate normal school we could not consider. It would be absolutely unjustifiable. The Normal school is a technical training school for teachers. We endeavor to provide for the training of teachers by devoting to it as much of the school funds as can be spared. There can be no argument advanced in favor of dividing the funds, or of separating Roman Catholic teachers in process of training from the others. The Roman Catholic teacher would not be prevented from acquiring religious instruction elsewhere, but it is clear that their own educational interests and that of the schools to be placed under their charge, would be best served by their attendance at the provincial Normal school.  
As to the question of permits.—The proposition in the memorandum might be agreed to by the government, but we carried out by a majority of administration.  
The last clause of the memorandum referring to the terms upon which the remedial bill should be withdrawn, is not, it is submitted, in accordance with the understanding arrived at upon the opening of the conference. The understanding was that in the event of a settlement being made, the remedial bill should be immediately withdrawn. The passing of the necessary legislation, and the carrying out of the terms of the settlement, was to be left to the parties. The clause of the memorandum referred to is, therefore, in violation of the understanding which was arrived at upon the opening of the conference. It is not, it is submitted, in accordance with the understanding which was arrived at upon the opening of the conference. The understanding was that in the event of a settlement being made, the remedial bill should be immediately withdrawn. The passing of the necessary legislation, and the carrying out of the terms of the settlement, was to be left to the parties. The clause of the memorandum referred to is, therefore, in violation of the understanding which was arrived at upon the opening of the conference.

kind during school hours. We desire to be understood in connection with this proposition that if it be made as a compromise offer, and not as embodying the policy which the government and legislature of the province are themselves endeavoring to pursue, it would be, however, to adopt such a measure in order to attain a settlement of the dispute.  
Second.—In the alternative we offer to repeal the present provision of the school act relating to religious exercises, and to enact in substance the following:

"No religious exercises or teaching to take place in any public school, except as provided in the act. Such exercises and teaching, when held, to be between half past three and four o'clock in the afternoon.  
If authorized by resolution of the trustees, such exercises to be allowed to be held in any public school between 3:30 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Such exercises and teaching to be conducted by any Christian clergyman whose religious exercises are approved of the school district, or by any person satisfactory to the majority of the trustees who may be authorized by said clergyman to act in his stead, the trustees to allow the period of religious exercises or teaching for the different days of the week to the representatives of the different religious denominations to which the pupils may belong in such a way as to proportion to the number of pupils in the schools of the respective denominations. Two or more denominations to have the privilege of occupying the same period of religious exercises. If no duly authorized representative of any denominations attend, the regular school work to be carried on until 4 o'clock."

No pupil to be permitted to be present at such religious exercises or teaching, if the parents shall object. In such case the pupil to be dismissed at 3:30. Where the school room accommodation at the disposal of the trustees permits, instead of allowing different forms of the week to different denominations, the trustees to direct that the pupils shall be separated and placed in different rooms for the purpose of religious exercises, as may be convenient.  
We believe that the foregoing proposal will remove every well founded grievance.

If the objection of the minority be that the schools are Protestant as alleged in some of their petitions, then the objection can be fully and finally disposed of by complete secularization.  
In this regard the desire to have equaling with efficient secular education, proper religious training, and a second plan proposed offers an effective method of attaining the object desired. In fact it is difficult to conceive what better plan could be proposed even were we not aware of the existing conditions. It would be, in any event, necessary to have some general provision as to the time allotted for religious exercises and teaching. The individual school could not be permitted to act without restraint. The time suggested seems to be a reasonable and sufficient portion of the school courses, and the hour in the day is undoubtedly the most convenient for the operation of the constitution.

At the same time no distinction of any kind between denominations would be made. Absolutely equal rights would be given to all religious groups, and even as present might carry out their views. While this desirable end would be accomplished the uniformity and efficiency of the schools to which the children of all denominations are sent, would remain absolutely unimpaired and unaffected.  
CLIFFORD SIFTON, J. D. CAMERON, COMMISSIONERS' REJOINER.

"Manitoba Hotel Winnipeg, March 1, 1896.  
Hon. Clifford Sifton, Hon. J. D. Cameron, Gentlemen:—We beg leave to acknowledge your communication dated yesterday and written in reply to our suggestions for settlement of the Manitoba school question.  
We regret to find that there has been some misapprehension as to any understanding upon which conference was proceeded with. As the substance of those matters mentioned by you: we understand the facts to be that you insisted that no further consideration of the remedial bill should be pressed for by the establishment of separate schools, on Tuesday, and that we directed your attention to the announcement of that effect in the newspapers of the day, and I beg to say that we are most sincerely glad that the Roman Catholic minority with the Dominion government, asking that the bill be not taken up on Friday. This communication we sent, and we are as much surprised as yourselves to find that upon the night of the Friday following the bill was advanced, and we do not say that we are surprised to find that you should have a bill passed before the twenty-fifth of April, the day on which the Dominion parliament expires by effluxion of time.

It will be seen from the above remarks that the plan proposed involves the establishment of a state-aided separate school system, which in practical effect would carry out the provisions of the statute which prevailed prior to 1890, and would also involve grave additional evils and difficulties of which we have hitherto had experience. The objections may be summarized as follows: 1. The division of the people into separate denominational classes. 2. The necessary inferiority of the separate school. 3. The impairment of the efficiency of the public schools through division of school revenues. 4. The burdening of non-Catholic ratepayers by compelling them to maintain separate schools. 5. The according of special privileges to one denomination which could not on principle be denied to all the others, but which in practice could not be granted to such others without entire destruction of the school system.

It will not therefore be a matter of surprise to you that we are unable to accede to the proposition made, or any proposition based upon similar principles. We are prepared, however, to make good the promise to remedy any well founded grievance, if such exist, and we therefore submit a plan of suggested modifications, which we believe to be free from objections upon principle, and which in our opinion will remove any such grievances and at the same time in no way affect the efficiency of the public school system, or the rights of Roman Catholic children of the privilege of participation in the same educational advantages enjoyed by the rest of the people.

The first proposition is in the form of an alternative. First.—Should it be accepted as a satisfactory measure of relief to the minority, and as removing their grievances, we hereby offer the aid of the legislative grant, to the public school system, eliminating religious exercises and teaching of every

kind during school hours. We desire to be understood in connection with this proposition that if it be made as a compromise offer, and not as embodying the policy which the government and legislature of the province are themselves endeavoring to pursue, it would be, however, to adopt such a measure in order to attain a settlement of the dispute.  
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No other remedy possesses such perfect cleansing, healing and purifying properties as Burdock Blood Bitters. It not only cleanses internally, but it heals, when applied externally, all sores, ulcers, abscesses, scrofulous sores, blotches, eruptions, etc., leaving the skin clean and pure as a babe's. Taken internally it removes all morbid effete or waste matter from the system, and thoroughly regulates all the organs of the body, restoring the stomach, liver, bowels and blood to healthy action. In this way the sick become well, the weak strong, and those who have that tired, worn out feeling receive new vigor, and buoyant health and spirits, so that they feel like work. If your appetite is poor, your energy gone, your ambition lost, B.B.B. will restore you to the full enjoyment of happy vigorous life.

edged that this could be done with more advantage to all parties by the local legislature, and for this reason we are holding this conference. A discussion of the disadvantages of separate schools is therefore, in our view, not relevant to the present situation, and is likely to raise misleading issues. In our view, the much of your argument misses its mark because you have not recognized the present condition of affairs and dealt with our suggestions as compared with a regular system of separate schools, such as might be established under the remedial bill, or under the old system, but have rather confined your attention to maintaining that our proposition would involve some of the drawbacks of these other schools.  
We deeply regret that you have felt obliged to reject our proposition, and with all deference it does not appear to us that the objections, general and special, which you urge are such as to necessarily involve so serious a step. It would serve no useful purpose for us to support our view with any detailed argument, but some general considerations may be advanced as to the objections upon principle which you mention, viz.: (1) That our plan would divide the population into two classes, Roman Catholics and Protestants, giving the former class privileges against the latter; (2) that it would establish a system of state-supported separate schools; and (3) that the whole school organization would be modified to an unusual extent to bring it into accord with the separate school principle. As to the first of these objections, we may observe that the separation of the Roman Catholics and Protestants does not arise from our suggestion. It is made by the constitution, and arises as to them because they happen to be a minority of the population. It is inaccurate to say that the Roman Catholics are then as against the rest of the population. It is only the rights conferred on the minority by the constitution that are in question. The problem presented by the school privileges embodied in our proposal, will be considered later on. In so far as there is any principle violated by the application of taxes to the support of schools in which Roman Catholic doctrines are taught, our alternative suggestion would seem to be quite as objectionable as ours.  
In reply to your third objection, we beg to urge upon you that the changes we suggest are much less than what we understand to be involved ordinarily by the establishment of separate schools. As to text books and representation on the boards, as a matter of practice and administration we find that you raise, in point of fact, no objection. We do not see that the Roman Catholic people have a separate right to elect trustees or otherwise to have any special representation on the board of trustees, being content with the protection afforded by an appeal to your own department of education, and in this respect our proposals very materially limit what are always considered the privileges essential in connection with a separate school system. The proposed schools would be controlled by trustees elected by the whole body of ratepayers under the provisions of your school law. There does not seem to be any adequate foundation for your remark that the carrying into effect of our suggestion would involve a modification of school organization greater than usual in cases of separate schools. We desired to minimize such modification, and think to some extent we succeeded.  
As to your first objection in detail, we submit that under existing conditions there would not arise any great practical inconvenience, as in most of the localities affected the Roman Catholic population are sufficiently numerous to afford all necessary facilities for grading and completion. In any event it must be quite clear that the standard of efficiency maintained would naturally be higher with our views, which were in this respect imperfectly expressed in the memorandum. Neither of the propositions which you make would, as it appears to us, remove the scholastic and pecuniary treatment existing under the present system, nor would they possess the elements of permanency and freedom from friction in administration which are certainly necessary for a final and peaceable solution of existing difficulties.  
We once more appeal to you in the interests of the whole population of the province, indeed of the Dominion, as well as in the interests of the minority, to re-consider the decision at which you have arrived, and to make some proposal that we could regard as affording a chance of the settlement which we so earnestly desire.  
(Signed) DONALD A. SMITH, ALPHONSE DESJARDINS, A. R. DICKEY.