

NORTHWEST HISTORY.

Sir Donald A. Smith Says Manitoba Is Entitled to Separate Schools.

Exhaustive Review of Provincial Annals—A Plea for Justice to All Classes.

OTTAWA, March 19.—During the course of the long, protracted sitting of the House of Commons in discussion of the Remedial bill, Sir Donald A. Smith said: After the many able and eloquent addresses to which you and this house have listened for these many days back, and after the exhaustive discussion which has taken place, it would be entirely out of place for me to suppose that anything I could say would change one single vote of those who are about to pronounce upon the question now at issue. But, as representing one of the foremost, I would say the foremost, constituency of the Dominion, as having, some twenty-five years ago this month taken my seat as the first member from that new country of Manitoba; as having, also, been a member of the first legislature of Manitoba; and, further, as having been intimately connected for many years with the vast and important country, Rupert's Land, before it became a portion of the Dominion, I am sure the house will indulge me, even at this very late period of the debate, while I say a few words. I do not for a moment propose to enter into the merits of the case. These have been discussed, and ably discussed, on both sides of the House, but I think I may point to the circumstances under which, as commissioner from the Dominion, I went to the Northwest at a very critical period of this country's history. What were the circumstances of the country, and what were the relations of England, and of Canada, to the neighboring Republic at that time? We all know that they were anything but friendly; indeed that there was a very bitter feeling between the two countries, for the Alabama difficulty had not yet been disposed of, the joint high commission had not sat, as it did afterwards, to dispose of those very important points relating to the two countries, which came up from the civil war in the United States. At that time, too, we had not the same feeling of cordiality, on the part of the Mother Country, towards the Colonies, as we have to-day. The change is, indeed, a happy one, as showing the position of the country, and in showing on what the people of the Red river in a great measure depended, namely, the sympathy of those in the neighboring States of America, when they rose in insurrection against the Mother Country and against Canada—to read an authority on that question I have in my hand a newspaper which will be taken as good authority, I have no doubt, for it is the official organ of the Provisional Government of that day. Sir Donald read the heading of the article, reading:—"The consolidation—the future of the American continent—no flag—no empire—natural lines must prevail." And, also, the text of the article, which was in favor of annexation.

THE PROMISES GIVEN. Proceeding, Sir Donald said:—It may be thought somewhat out of place for me to point to these matters, for it has been said that any promises given to a small people, such as those of the Northwest at that time, ought not to have an effect on the country which would be lasting. At that time, as must be known to many of the 11,000 people settled along the Red River, 6,000, or a majority of 1,000 were Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholics were, alone, principally responsible for the insurrection. They were different from the English. They were martial in their habits. They had been disciplined, and had borne arms from their earliest youth. They had been accustomed to go into the provinces for the annual buffalo hunt, and, for their own protection, they had to band themselves together, and to have their commandant, captains and other officers. One the other hand, the English were chiefly farmers, not wanting in courage, but not hunters like the others. Consequently, when this trouble on the Red River commenced, the French-speaking people, or a very large portion of them, took possession of the only fort of the time, Fort Garry. They had 700 men under arms, while there was no police, no troops, no government forces of any kind to cope with them. Under these circumstances, Mr. Macdougall, failing to get entrance into the country, the government commissioners, one of whom happened to be myself. When we got there, we found it was, indeed, a difficult task we had before us, to explain to those people what the intentions of the Dominion government were. The Dominion government had, as I think, very unwisely, sent up people in advance of the time at which the country was to be given up to Canada, to survey the country, to make roads, to interfere, in short, with the government of the country as it then existed. There can be no doubt but that an impression prevailed in the midst of the settlers, not only the French, but the English as well, that they were to be overridden by what were called the new comers, and they had, consequently, some justification for the opposition they entertained to Canada. However, we did meet the settlers of the Red River in convention, and an explanation was made to them with regard to the intended action of Canada. They were assured that their rights, their privileges, everything they then had, would be retained to them and that justice would be done in every way.

APPOINTED A COMMISSIONER. I was appointed as a special commissioner, with powers beyond those of my colleagues. But I think I may be permitted to read one portion of the letter of instructions which I received from the government, and which was really a commission at the time. Sir Donald quoted from the commission, which declared that the government did not deem it expedient to hamper Sir Donald with more specific instructions than were therein set forth, but he was to co-operate with Mr. McDougall. I should say, continued Sir Donald, that I only had one opportunity of conferring with Mr. McDougall, but that

was 120 or 140 miles away from the Red River, when he was on his way back from his abortive mission, and, consequently, I had to deal with these matters myself. Sir Donald then gave a letter, expressing the satisfaction with which Sir Donald had placed his services at the disposal of the Canadian government, and containing this clause: "You will observe it (a message from Her Majesty's Secretary of State) calls upon all who have any complaint to make or wishes to express to address themselves to me as Her Majesty's representative, and you may state, with the utmost confidence, that the Imperial government has no intention of acting otherwise, or permitting to act otherwise, than in perfect good faith toward the inhabitants of the Red River district of the Northwest. The people may rely upon it that respect and protection will be extended to the different religious persuasions, that titles to real estate, and further, that will be perfectly guarded, and that all the franchises which existed, or which the people may prove themselves qualified to exercise, shall be duly continued, or, if they are contested, in declaring the desire and determination of Her Majesty's cabinet, you may very safely use the terms of the ancient formula that "right shall be done in all cases."

Continuing, Sir Donald said: A letter to the same effect was sent to Governor MacTavish, who was then governor of Assiniboia. I have said that there were great misgivings on the part of the people of the Northwest with regard to the treatment they would receive from the Canadian government, and that they regarded with apprehension confederation with Canada.

WHAT RIEL SAID. But they came together, in an open air meeting, on the 19th and 20th of January. After the complaints had been given they determined to form a convention, and, perhaps, I will be permitted to read a few lines here in which Mr. Riel, who then assumed the title of president of the provisional government, and Mr. Donahoe, his right hand man, spoke of the proceedings at that meeting. Mr. Riel and Mr. Donahoe both exclaimed: "We accept the commission as genuine, and are merely to consider what is to be done under it; and then Mr. Riel said: "Before this assembly breaks up I can't but express my feelings, however briefly. I came here with fear. We are not yet enemies, but we are very nearly being so. As soon as we understood each other we joined in demanding what English fellow subjects in common with us believed to be our just rights. I am not afraid to say our rights, for we all have rights. We claim no half rights, mind you, but all the rights we are entitled to. Those rights will be set forth by our representatives, and, what is more, gentlemen, we will get them." Following on this there was a convention of all parts of the settlement. There were 24, an equal number for both sides, French and English. They met, and they brought up, in the first instance, a bill of rights, which had been drawn up by Mr. Riel and his friends. But that was objected to, and was not accepted by the convention. Then it was decided that another bill of rights should be framed. This was done by the convention, and I have here an authentic paper showing what it is. It is true that, in that bill of rights there was nothing said about separate schools. The only mention made of schools at all is this: "That, while the Northwest remains a territory, the sum of \$25,000 a year be appropriated for schools, roads and bridges," and such promise I have as a special commissioner for the Dominion of Canada. That was implemented by Canada; and to show that what was done at that time was approved, I may be permitted to read a few lines, although somewhat personal, to the matter. This is a letter from the Secretary of State of the Dominion, addressed to myself:

GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED IT. Sir Donald read the letter, which warmly thanked him, on behalf of His Excellency, for his valuable services. It contained this clause: "In selecting you for the delicate and important mission thus confided to you, His Excellency was influenced by his conviction that your thorough knowledge of the people, and the high estimation in which you were held by all classes there, eminently qualified you to act with effect in disabusing the minds of the misguided people of the settlement of the erroneous opinions they have been led to form of the feelings and intentions of the Government of the Dominion in reference to their country."

Mr. Mulock—"What was the date of that letter?" Sir Donald Smith—"It is dated 22nd February, 1872, so that there was plenty of time to reflect." Mr. Mulock—"And to forget." Sir Donald Smith—"I mention this to show that the Government accepted the promises made by me as being in the right direction. What I have said was, that the Roman Catholics had their schools, and that the Protestants had their schools, and each body had a grant from the government of the country at that time. If they did not enter minutely and particularly into the description of the separate schools, it was because they thought it altogether unnecessary. Any contention about separate schools was never dreamt of by them. As was said by the Minister of Finance, in his able address, they were a simple-minded people. To show that they really were so, and that they went very much on good faith, I may mention how properties were conveyed from one written contract; all that was necessary was that the parties interested should go to the office of the Hudson Bay Company, who kept the land register, and they were assured that it was desired to make over such and such property to a particular person. That showed, I think, that they were simple-minded, and they had an idea or belief, that when words were pledged it was as good as all the deeds that could be written; so it was with regard to the promises that were made to them at that time. They knew that they had their schools, and they believed that the promises made would be well and faithfully kept, and they did not care to have anything of a more binding character with regard to them."

SUGGESTED A DEPUTATION. After giving the reasons and promises for the Dominion government with regard to the bill of rights, the Commissioner, that is myself, said: "Having gone through the articles may I now be permitted to say a few words? Your list is not only long, but it contains many things of great importance. In coming here I had no idea of it nor had the Canadian government. However, I am authorized to do what in my judgment may appear best in the state of public affairs here. It was thought, at the same time, there might be some points raised that I could not deal with personally with any satisfaction to the people of the country. This being the case, I have now, on the part of the Dominion government and as authorized by them, to invite a delegation of the residents of the Red River to meet and confer with me at Ottawa—a delegation of two or more of the residents of Red River, as they may think best, the delegation to confer with the government and wish to explain the wants and wishes of the Red River people, as well as to discuss and arrange for the representation of the country in parliament. I feel that, in the case, it was alone necessary for me to do so, particularly with these matters on the part of the government. I am authorized to offer a very cordial reception to the delegates who may be sent from this country to Canada."

This was received with hearty applause. Then I said: "I myself, feel very confident that the result will be entirely satisfactory to the people of the North-west, as well as to the Canadian government, and that it will be. While very little, indeed, was said here about schools, the people unquestionably had them in their minds, and they would enjoy the privilege of having their schools before them. This, I think, from what took place in the legislature of Manitoba in 1871, when, I think, the school law was passed. It may not be known to a great many of the members of this house, or those who composed the legislature of Manitoba at that time were members of that very convention, and, in deciding that there should be those schools, they were looking to what had passed in this convention fresh in their minds."

A PLEA FOR UNITY. But, I will say to the leader of the opposition, and I will say to every member on both sides of this house, that I trust they will join heartily and cordially together, and that each will, if possible, endeavor to outdo the other in his desire and in his determination to do justice to all classes in Manitoba, and to do it in the best way. (Ministerial cheers.) I trust that this question shall be taken altogether from the arena of party politics. I trust that we all shall look only the best interests of the country in the matter. With the assistance of the gentlemen in opposition, I am sure that it could be done in this way, and I think they will agree with the members on this side of the house, if, in the end, it is found that justice—proper measure of justice—cannot be obtained from the province of Manitoba it will then be the right, and ought to be the duty of this house to intervene. (Ministerial cheers.) I Episcopal church, one of the highest authorities in that church, say that, while his people were, perhaps, in favor of separate schools, still he did not desire that these schools administered by a dual government, and he would desire, and wish above all things, that, if such arrangements were made, the schools of the Catholics and of the Protestants should be disposed of by the local government. I fear that I have taken up too much of the time of the house.

Several members—"No; go on, Sir Donald Smith. If we have done so, it is solely from my earnest wish and earnest desire that there shall be no religious feuds in this country, that neighbors shall be neighbors indeed, and that they shall, and that they will, do to others as they desire should be done to themselves. That is the golden rule. (Ministerial cheers.) It has been said here that some gentlemen, in votes they are cast, may do so for certain considerations. I believe, however, that that language was overdrawn. I do not, for a moment, suppose that the gentleman who spoke to that effect, had reference to myself personally. But I have seen in some newspapers, which I would wish to say that if I did go to Manitoba, ostensibly for the purpose of aiding in settling this vexed question, that it was no philanthropic idea, but in my mind, but that it was for the advantage of a certain company with which I happen to be connected, namely, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. It was said that there was a question coming on of a demand on the government, a request to the government, or the institution, or the hope, that a very large sum of money would be got by the railway company from the government in exchange for a certain portion of their land. I believe it is said that the amount was one or two millions, or a few millions or so, it really does not matter, or a few millions nowadays, a few or a dozen millions more or less, does not matter. I suppose, and so it was said that the C.P.R. had approached the government with a view of selling to them their lands. I will say, and say it without hesitation, that up to the present moment, the C.P.R. company have never thought of approaching the government with any idea of selling their land, and it is a rumor entirely without foundation in truth. Once more, I would express my earnest hope that this school question may be settled, and settled to the satisfaction, not only of this House, but of the whole country. I should like to see this Remedial bill pass to its second reading by acclamation. I do not look upon it that, by voting for the second reading of this bill, members are necessarily committed to vote for the bill reading. If there should be a conference in the meantime, and I trust that there may be a conference, I am so hopeful as to trust that there will be a Remedial bill required from this House. Mr. Mulock—"Why proceed at all if you are satisfied that there can be a settlement?" Sir Donald Smith—"I think myself, at any rate, certainly having gone so far, it is well that the principle of the bill shall be maintained by all; and it will be for us, for further consideration afterwards, what shall be done for the matter. (Loud Ministerial cheers.)

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MR. GREENWAY ANXIOUS TO SETTLE. Of course I am not here to give any particular conversation that passed between us, but it is only justice to those gentlemen to say that they, to me, appeared to be most anxious to have the matter settled, so as to do substantial justice to the minority, as well as to the majority. I was permitted to represent this to the government, here, and I hope, and I am very sure, that it is their most earnest desire to exhaust all means within their power to have justice done in a way in which, I believe, it can best be done, and that is through the local government. True, it is within the power of this parliament to pass a remedial bill, and, if there is no other way of obtaining what we are all of opinion ought to be done, equal justice to the majority and to the minority, if, after every means of obtaining that from within, that there is no other way of legitimate source, it is found impossible to get that justice from the minority, then I consider it rests with this government, and that this government ought to do so earnestly. I trust, however, hon. gentlemen, you will all feel that it is their duty, as well as it is the duty of those on this side of the house, to assist in every possible way to bring about a settlement. I cannot see myself that there is any necessity for a commission to work over the facts and circumstances, but I do trust and desire that there may be, at any rate, a personal coming together of the two governments, and that there shall be a conference. I am afraid, while I am sure of your efforts in the right direction have been made by the ministry to effect what they believe would be a satisfactory solution of the matter, I am afraid they have not personally come together in such a way as to be able to exchange each other's views, wishes and ideas, and so have an opportunity of deciding, in that way, what can best be done under the circumstances. I will say to the leader of the opposition, I am sorry he is not in his place at this time, and I regret, and I am sure we all regret, very much the cause, that he is unwell.

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LONDON, March 29.—Arthur from Berlin that Arthur to Russia on the subject his Daily News print translation of a twen Russia a allows Russia to along the coast fleets therein, but Rt. Hon. A. J. the treaty was, that that he had rec Duke of Cambri have accepted posed for him if unanimously, but was opposed by he could not allow ced in the matter. Mr. George J. New Zealand, by house of common any truth in the ain had purchas whole strip of ter on the south to pany's territory, no river, constitu ary, for the sum to reply, saying t sistent upon a pr given of such a q ever, semi-offici that the British chased Delagoa. All hope of sav entombing in the New Zealand, by damp, which kills has been abando First lord of the J. Balfour, answer to river, constitu ary, for the sum to reply, saying t sistent upon a pr given of such a q ever, semi-offici that the British chased Delagoa. All hope of sav entombing in the New Zealand, by damp, which kills has been abando First lord of the J. 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