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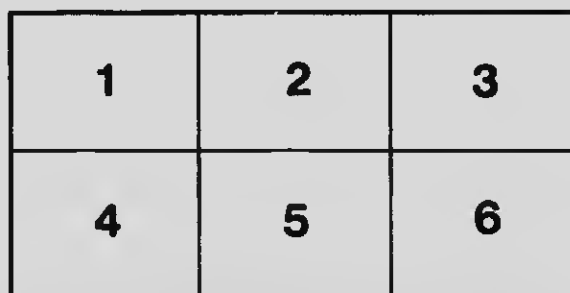
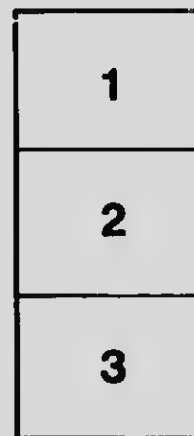
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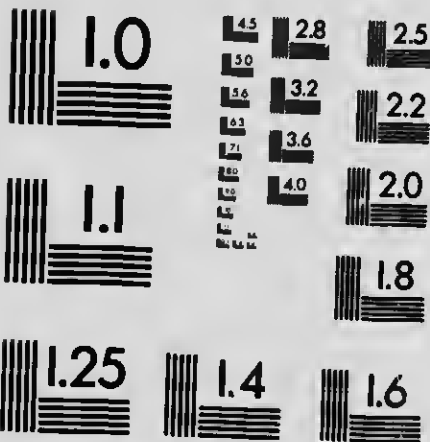
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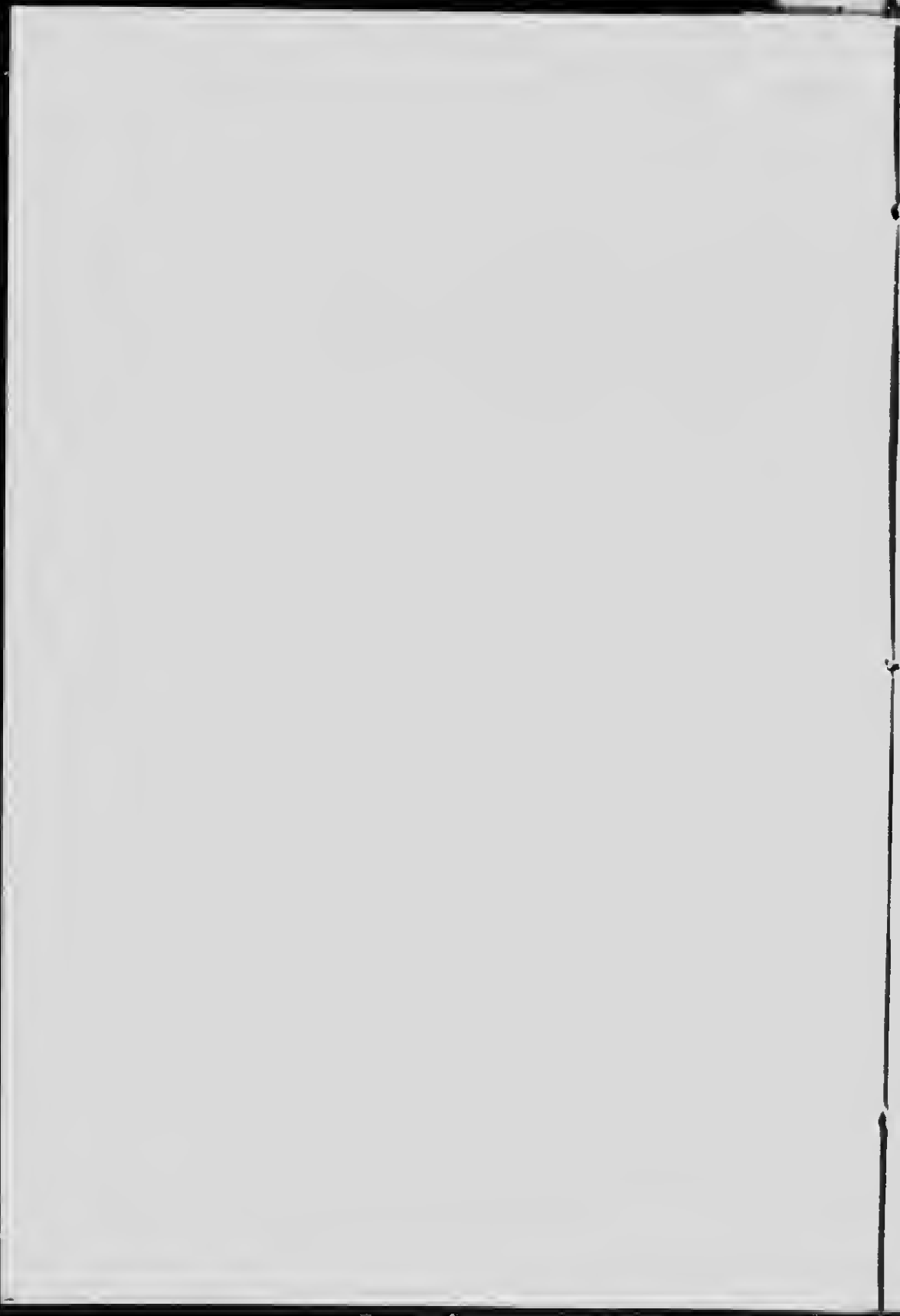
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Reprinted from the Gleaner, Huntingdon, Que., of April 20, 1903.

SHALL THE QUEBEC SYSTEM RULE CANADA?

In introducing the Northwest bills Sir Wilfrid Laurier took occasion to say that, as a French-Canadian, he pointed with pride to the minority in Quebec never having had occasion to complain of their treatment. That statement we knew to be contrary to fact and the Gleaner of March 2 said so. Quoted in the house of commons the truthfulness of that brief article has been scouted and the Gleaner derided as insignificant and of no authority. No notice has been taken in these columns of what has been said, because those who spoke thus knew no better, but when the gentleman who owes his seat in the cabinet to his pretension that he represents the Quebec minority gives the Gleaner the lie, it is necessary to defend the accuracy of statements in its issue of the 2nd March. This is due to its readers, who have a right to be satisfied that they have not been deceived or misled by false information.

GOVERNMENT

The origin of all governments is due to the necessity of the people combining to effect purposes of such magnitude or of such a nature that they could not accomplish individually. Among the purposes for which they so unite is the establishment of schools. In the settlement of the country families thus united to ensure that their children should be able to read, write, and count. As the country grew and society became more complex, the need to levy taxes for their support, to see that all paid equally and none evade

payment, necessitated government supervision. In assuming the direction of education it is surely plain that the government should deal with all on the same terms, that no set of families should obtain a preference over others but all be treated alike. When a clergyman comes and says, "I want the children of my people to be taught in school the doctrines and ritual of the church I represent," surely the government ought to have no other reply than that the schools are intended to impart only the elements of education, and to add aught else is beyond their purpose and touches subjects with which no government has a right to meddle. To see that Jack and Jenny shall be able to read, to write, to count is the task of every government: to go beyond that, and undertake to give them the training to fit them as members of any church, is not. Is not this the A B C of political principles, of the mutual compact on which all self-governing communities rest ?

TOLERATION

Those who insist on this rule of government conduct are called bigots, because they refuse to add to the studies of the elementary schools training in the catechism and formularies of a certain church and that this be done at the expense of the taxpayers generally. To answer, That it is the business of the State to see that every boy and girl can read and write, and that each church look after their sectarian tuition, and do so at their own cost and not use public money, is to provoke a shower of epithets of intol-

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ance. Refusal to pervert the original purpose of elementary schools, or to allow them to become the nurseries of any church, does not bespeak bigotry, for it implies an earnest desire to secure to all children a sufficient knowledge of letters to enable them to discharge their duties as citizens. Beyond this the government has no right to go. Does not the charge of intolerance rather apply to those who seek a preference at the cost of their fellows? If a member of a family will not eat out of the common dish or sit at the same table, it would be considered unreasonable that those he would not eat or sit with should pay for his separate dish and table. Which comes more nearly being a bigot, the father who is willing his children should go to school with the children of all his neighbors, or the father who says he will not send them except to a school where the parents of the children go to the same church as himself?

CONSCIENCE

But it is pleaded such parents cannot do so because of conscientious scruples. In that case, why should they ask those who do not agree with them to bear the cost arising out of their scruples? To place all its taxpayers on an equality, it is necessary that the government place no heavier burden on one than on another. That it cannot do if it is to meet requirements backed up by professions of conscience. Under the existing immigration policy tens of thousands of members of the Greek church are being planted in the Northwest. If their clergy come forward and de-

mand separate schools on the ground of conscience, how can a government refuse that has granted separate schools to another church? There are said to be 20,000 Jews in Montreal. If they ask for separate schools, on what score could the concession be refused by our Quebec government? Once admit the principle that a government has to grant whatever is asked in the name of conscience, and government becomes impossible. All that is required of any government is that it protect each citizen from interference on account of his conscientious belief, but to give public money to assist him in getting what he considers his conscience enjoins, goes beyond its functions. Sift this demand for separate schools, and at the core will be found the pretension that the church which asks it arrogates a superiority that entitles it to privileges to which no other church can lay claim.

A SLANDER ENDORSED

Mr Fisher asserts no inequality exists in Quebec by the granting of separate schools, because in the schools of the minority "the Protestant religion is taught in the Protestant schools of the province of Quebec just as much as the Catholic religion is taught in the Catholic schools." Is this assertion of the Hon Minister of Agriculture true? No doctrines are taught in the schools of the minority, the dogmas of no church, nor are the scholars trained in the ritual of any church: these schools are positively and purely non-sectarian, yet the people of the Dominion, on the word of a minister of the crown, are asked to believe they are the counterpart of schools where instruction

in dogma and ritual come first, and to accept the existence of the common schools of the minority as justifying separate schools in Quebec. No church in Quebec uses the elementary schools as training institutions for its membership except one, and that in itself implies inequality in privilege and, therefore, injustice to the minority. More serious than this misrepresentation of the character of the schools of the minority, is the misrepresentation of the faith of the minority. Mr Fisher speaks of "the Protestant religion." That is a popular phrase among the majority of this province, who have been taught our faith was invented by Luther. Mr Fisher's adopting it confirms its use. There is no such entity as "the Protestant religion," and it is an insult to imply there is. Protestants believe there is only one religion—that of the Lord Jesus—and whoever says aught else promotes a mistake that has wrought grievous injury to the scattered communities of Protestants in Quebec.

INEFFICIENCY

Mr Fisher asserts the church schools of Quebec are efficient, and that no hardship is implied where a Protestant finds none other available for his children. On this head the evidence of a colleague of the hon. gentleman is sufficient. Before Mr Fitzpatrick entered the Dominion parliament he was a member of the Quebec legislature. Mr Pinault introduced a bill requiring that no ratepayer unable to read and write should be chosen as a school commissioner. The super-

intendent of education asked the government to prevent the passage of the bill because if it became law many parishes would be unable to secure boards. On the 10th of February, 1893, Mr Fitzpatrick rose in his place, and addressing the legislative assembly, said—

Our school system is the worst that could be found in any country; its evil effects are everywhere apparent. The house had been informed that in many parishes the people were so illiterate that it was impossible to find commissioners able to read or write. He himself knew that 30 per cent. of the jurymen in our law courts could not sign their names, yet large sums of money were voted for schools. To what use was that money put and were the popular classes better educated today than 20 years ago? He thought not. . . . Classical education was on a fairly good footing, but in respect of all that concerned financial and commercial pursuits the majority were not on equal footing, not that the ability was wanting, but because of the vicious educational system. . . . Popular education in this province must be thorough and practical, otherwise, we would never be anything but hewers of wood and drawers of water to the educated minority. . . . I am a Catholic and it is from that standpoint that I say our elementary system of education places us on a footing of inferiority as compared with our separated brethren. It is useless to try to hide this sad state of things any longer.

This is the evidence of the Hon Charles Fitzpatrick, K.C., minister of justice, as to the schools to which Mr Fisher says it is no hardship for the minority to send their children. It may be added examination of the jury-rolls showed not 30 but 60 per cent. of the jurymen were men of mark.

TAXES

There exists a confusion of ideas regarding taxes. It is said the taxes of those who desire separate schools should be handed back to them. Are the taxes imposed by either the Dominion or province imposed according to creed? Do the treasurers on payment being made credit the church of the contributor with the amount he pays? These questions shatter a fallacy repeated of late every day at Ottawa. The taxes are paid into a common fund to be expended for the good of the public at large. To divert any portion to a particular section, because of its theological belief, is to assail the principle of self-government, for if carried out the Presbyterian church would want its share, the Methodist, the Anglican, the Jew and the Ukhor, and self-government become impossible. To favor one church with what is denied to others, is to create a preference and an acknowledgment of superiority. Fair play requires that what cannot be done by all should not be given to any one.

THE THREAT

The spectre is conjured that if so-and-so is not done for the minority in the Northwest, the majority may withdraw the privileges it vouchsafes in Quebec. What! Shut the doors of the common-schools of Quebec and compel their scholars to march to what Bishop Clouthier described, in his sermon at Three Rivers on the 9th instant, as "confessional schools"? Day after day the Bourassas and Lavergnes, who have taken so large a part in the debate, have dwelt

with unctuous complacency on the Quebec minority being given common schools, and the request urged that the majorities of the other provinces follow the splendid example of Christian liberality which the Quebec majority sets them. In what does that liberality consist? In taking the public funds of a province to create a system of church schools, and then boast it is not compulsory on Protestants to send their children to them. Is that liberality? And then the ominous tho' veiled warning is given, If you do not give the West separate schools, we may revise our educational laws in Quebec. What does that mean? That the doors of the non-sectarian schools are to be shut, and their scholars given the option of being instructed by nuns and brothers or of growing up without learning. Let that threat be carried out. Nothing better could happen the minority, for it would draw the attention of the civilized world to the extraordinary condition of affairs that exists in Quebec. Just think of a minister of the crown describing as a "privilege" that British subjects are not *forced* to attend confessional schools! There is no privilege about it. It is a plain duty of every government to see that its people have opportunity to acquire the elements of education. That is all the minority of Quebec ask, and they dare any body of men to deprive them of it. Common schools were not "conceded" by the majority, as has been repeatedly asserted during the debate. They existed long before the majority had any elementary

schools, and they thank no man, church, or legislature for them. They are the schools of the people and every one of the minority worthy of the name of a man, treats the threat to close them with confident defiance. Those who inspire the policy of Quebec have too much at risk to bring on a crisis.

INHERENT RIGHTS

It is humiliating to read in the speeches of the advocates of the Northwest bills the expressions of gratitude for the mercies vouchsafed to the Quebec minority, the forbearance that allows that minority to exist. Read, for instance, Mr Fisher's utterances, and you are constrained to ask, Is Quebec part of the British empire? If it is, why this effusion of thankfulness? Are the minority not entitled to all the rights of British subjects? If they are, why fall down on the knees in adulation of the majority that permits to them the enjoyment in some degree of those rights? There is need of manhood here. The Quebec minority are not foreigners, they are not intruders, they are not dependents on the goodwill of any church or race. They are here in a British colony and the rights of British subjects are theirs, and if they fear to assert them, and meanly accept those rights as gifts made by a benevolent majority, then they are slaves, unworthy of the name of freemen, and deserve to have the sycophants among them chosen as their spokesmen in parliament. It is no favor, no concession, to provide a non-sectarian education for every child; that is a right of the British

subject, but it is an injustice and a crying wrong to take public money to pay for any other description of education. It is a low estimate, that property to the value of thirty million dollars owned by Protestants in Quebec is taxed to support church schools.

THE EXODUS

Mr Fisher ridicules the statement that the decline of the townships is due to any injustice done them. There is no use in wasting space on this head when palpable evidence is at hand. The frontier of the county of Huntingdon is over 60 miles long. It faces two counties in New York state, Clinton and Franklin. The latter alone can be compared with Huntingdon, though even its soil and other natural advantages are inferior. The two counties are divided by an invisible line. Now what do we find? In Huntingdon the English-speaking farmers leaving; in Franklin no perceptible change. Why thus? Because in Franklin county there are common-schools, the schools of a nation: in Huntingdon the schools of a church and farms on which if the English owner can be got rid of church dues and assessments can be levied. Is it not reasonable to conclude that if Huntingdon did not afford a field for separate schools and church dues, it would have retained its original settlers as Franklin has done? Mr Fisher explains the exodus as a natural movement of population and declares that the exodus of French-Canadians has been 7 times greater. There is a simple question in arithmetic here involved. The decrease in

the Protestants of the Eastern Townships has been one-fourth. If the exodus of French-Canadians has been seven times greater than that of the English, how does Mr Fisher account for any French being left in the province? This surpasses any of his census blunders. The point to be noted in the case of the Quebec minority is not the passing of drafts from the natural increase as in the case of the French, but of the uprooting of the original stock. Seventy years ago the population of the Eastern Townships was exclusively English. Forty years ago they had a clear majority; to-day they are in a minority. Is not this in itself sufficient evidence that something is wrong? Supposing that it was the majority that had dwindled thus in half a century, what an outcry there would be, what demands for royal commissions to discover the cause and suggest remedies. It is not they, however, for they have increased; it is the minority who have abandoned the lands they redeemed from the forest, the homes they provided, the churches in which they worshipped, the graves of their loved ones, and, instead of regret, their disappearance is exulted over by a clerical organ as "the peaceable conquest" of the Townships. Here are La Verité's words:

Fifty years ago this portion of the province of Quebec was a country where the English element dominated everywhere. In spite of the scourge of emigration, which has taken away so many of our fellow countrymen, we are rapidly making the peaceful conquest of this region. The same phenomenon appears in other portions of the

province where the English element was lately preponderating. So that it is easy to foresee the day when the province of Quebec will be practically a country not of a mixed population but of a homogeneous population. Those who have doubt about the future of the French race in America will do well to think over the eloquence of the census figures. Similarly those who consider as a dream the project of creating a new France on the shores of the St Lawrence in the more or less distant future will find there a reply to their objections.

HYPOCRISY

It is humiliating to listen to the assertion repeated over and over that Quebec is a model in its treatment of minorities, and to have its example held up to the other provinces for imitation. To those who live in the rural portions of Quebec, and who know the workings of the process devised for the slow and sure extinction of that portion of the minority who live by the plow, such talk is hypocrisy of sickening dye. The pretended love while smothering-out an entire element of the population, the affected regard for rights while filching them away, is that of the Nuremberg maid whose clasp was death. There are counties where the minority number only a few hundreds, in some not a score. They are presented with the choice of sending their children to the confession schools to which they are compelled to pay taxes or of keeping them at home, yet the boastings of the majority of their tolerance, their tender regard for the consciences of the minority, re-echo throughout the Dominion, and unthinking Protestants in Montreal join in the applause. From St Boniface comes the cry "Give us

the same treatment as Quebec gives its minority." Should the government of Manitoba listen to that petition and answer it literally, it will devise a system and carry it out with unsleeping perseverance to drive the minority off the land.

THE LESSON TO THE OTHER PROVINCES

The unfortunate state of affairs in Quebec did not come about in a day; it was accomplished by slow and gradual aggression. It is daily repeated the concession embodied in the Northwest bills is so small that there is no cause for agitation. Nothing is small that can be used as a fulcrum for further demands. Consider how the separate school has grown in its native province. It began with schools under government control: it ended in handing them over to the direction of the bishops. There is a distinct understanding that no bill affecting education shall be introduced into the legislature until submitted to and approved by the Archbishop of Quebec, and thus the direction of one of its most important functions is abdicated by the provincial government. On the other hand, the control of the common schools is not given to the minority: they are managed by nominees of the government. Granting the principle of separation in education, it follows there should be separation in all public institutions, and so in Quebec we find separate hospitals and asylums, separate agricultural colleges and prisons, so that a seventh of the public revenue is thus absorbed. Once concede the principle of separation and you must logically con-

cede it wherever it may be demanded. The curse of the Old World is class privileges: the giving to a few special advantages at the cost of the many. We are laying new foundations in the West. Shall they not include equal rights to all, privileges to none? Shall there not be one measure of law and one administration of it for all? Shall the State, while respecting the consciences of all and giving to all alike the same protection, see that no concession be given in the name of conscience that does violence to other consciences? Let that glorious new West we are up-rearing be the home of freedom, where class and caste, rank and precedence, prerogative and assumption of superiority are unknown, and all men stand on the same footing in the eyes of the State, subject to the same laws, and exemptions and favors granted to none. And in carrying this ideal of government into practice the people of the West need not concern themselves as to the minority of Quebec, or heed the threat that if they do not grant what is asked of them, that minority will suffer. The West already grants all the Quebec minority has in the way of education. Ensure to your people in the West non-sectarian schools, and they will have all the Quebec minority wish for. The Quebec minority seeks no favor and, alas, does not even get justice.

PEACE

The cry is echoed from quarters that surprise many. Grant what is provided in these Northwest bills and let us have peace. Who are those who disturb

the peace: those who make demands for special favors or those who refuse them? To judge by what the Montreal papers say, the aggressors on public rights are the promoters of peace and goodwill, and those who withstand them are bigots, firebrands, and persecutors. Which is to be blamed, those trying to cast a root of bitterness into the waters from which a new-born nation is to drink, or those striving to keep it out? The moral constitution of the world is such, that to engraft wrong in the make-up of a nation is to provide something that will rankle and irritate and end in a convulsion to cast it out. Are not those who are solicitous that the West be spared what has been the source of so much trouble to the older provinces, the granting of exceptional favors and special privileges, the true friends of peace? The path of justice is the path of peace.

