Opinions of Liberal Members

— ON —

MANITOBA SCHOOL BILL

(Taken from "Hansard" of 1896.)

Mr. Laurier, April 8, 1896, Hansard 5785—God help my poor fellow-countrymen and co-religionists of Manitoba if all the help they are going to have is what the hon. gentleman and his followers are prepared to give them. I pity my poor fellow-countrymen of Manitoba or anywhere else if they expect any justice from the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Devlin—I know what the policy of the leader of the Opposition is. I know that in his veins there courses true and noble blood, and I know that there is not to-day in the whole Dominion of Canada a man who holds dearer the interests of the grand French Canadian race than the Hon. Wilfred Laurier. Sir, he has never spoken one word in this House against doing full and adequate justice to the minority of Manitoba—never.

Mr. Laurier, April 14, Hansard 6379—When the Manitoba Act was considered in this House of Commons, it is a matter of history that the intention of the legislature was to put the Roman Catholic minority in Manitoba on exactly the same footing as the Roman Catholic minority in Ontario and the Protestant minority in Quebec, that is to say, that their separate schools would be beyond the reach of the legislature of Manitoba, that they would be in such a position that the legislature of Manitoba could no more touch their schools than the legislature of Ontario could touch the separate schools of that province, or than the legislature of Quebec could touch the separate schools in that Province.

Mr. Laurier, March 3, Hansard 2756—What is before the House? A half-hearted and faint measure.

Mr. Laurier, March 3, 1896—

A measure of compromise and nothing else.

It is a compromise which is to be administered by a hostile government.

Mr Geoffrion—I am just as anxious as hon. gentlemen opposite are that justice should be rendered, and that our constitution should be respected But I most emphatically say that this Bill, which I have now before me, does not render justice, and I am most decidedly in favor of voting the six months' hoist, because the acceptance of such a Bill would be a delusion and a denial of justice. It has the label of a Remedial Act, but I do not see the remedy. . . As this Bill, if passed, will, in my opinion, exhaust the remedial legislation which is to be introduced pursuant to the order adopted by the Government, it will leave the Catholics of Manitoba in a worse position than they would occupy if this Bill did not pass.

Mr. Geoffrion, March 4, 1896—I stated at Verchéres before the electors, as I state here, that my feelings are in favor of

remedial legislation; that I am ever ready to support or contribute in the best way I can to the passing of any legislation that will remedy the grievances of the minority in Manitoba. I told the hon. Minister that I would at once declare—not that I would support the Government—because that I never will—but that I would support the measure. They voted for the man who promised that he would be in favor of remedial legislation, and I am still in favor of it. I oppose this Bill precisely because I feel that if we were to pass it to-day, it would put an end to all possible chance of re-establishing separate schools in Manitoba.

Mr. Langelier, March 5—This Bill is simply a mockery.

Mr. Monet, March 12, 1896—I had already stated—and I repeat the statement—that, if Archbishop Langevin were satisfied with the Bill, viewed from a religious standpoint, we are not satisfied with it at all, both from a national and from a political standpoint.

Mr. Rinfret, March 10, 1896—Now, Sir, I think it my duty to vote against the Bill, and also because it can in no way remedy the grievances complained of by the Catholic minority nor will it restore to them the rights and privileges they have been so unjustly deprived of.

Mr. Carroll, March 10, 1896—I am against this law because I think it is the death-blow to the French language in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Monet, March 12, 1896—But the only remedial thing in this Bill is the title.

Mr. McIsaac, March 18—The Bill before the House is only a shadow of the remedial order.

Mr. Bruneau, March 19—We oppose with might and main this Bill because it does not involve a single provision calculated to deal full justice to our fellow-countrymen out west.

Mr. Bruneau—I have been brought up in the great Liberal school which admits of no compromise when the national or religious rights of our compatriots are at stake. Should I have to struggle for twenty, thirty years, I shall never give up fighting the good fight in favor of the rights of our Manitoba co-religionists, and I will endeavor by all the means in my power to restore to them the rights they enjoyed previous to 1890. Then, whenever they will be tempted to call us traitors to our race and creed, they will remember that the traitors are on their side, as they have been too mean to secure to our compatriots their rights and privileges as they existed prior to 1890. I may tell those hon. gentlemen that they ought to admit that the Bill does not render justice to the Manitoba minority, does not actually secure to them a single atom of the rights, pledges, and privileges taken away from them.

Mr. Bruneau—"The Bill provides, first, to invite the Government of the province of Manitoba to take action." To put it in other words, the Bill is a compromise, and not a remedial law. Could there be found, I ask, anything more unjust than such a legislation? It gives nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a cent to the Catholic schools, while something like five hundred dollars is given to each public school.

Mr. Edwards—Although I do not believe in disallowance generally, I do believe that this Act of 1890 should have been disallowed.

Mr. Bruneau—I shall vote against the Bill, because it is incomplete and does not render justice to our fellow-countrymen.

Mr. Charlton, March 12, 1896—Now, Sir, this motion for the six months' hoist, which I shall support. It demands the support of those who believe that the Bill affords no adequate remedy for an assumed grievance.

Mr. McCarthy—The hon.gentleman says he cannot vote for that because he is opposed to the principle of separate schools. Remember, the House has already passed the second reading of the Bill, and we are bound to make it as good a measure as we can, reserving our right to oppose it on the third reading, if, taken as a whole, it is not such a measure as we can support.

Mr. Geoffrion (Verchéres) Hansard 2854—Sir, having decided to vote against this Bill, I repeat that I shall do so, not because

I am opposed to remedial legislation. On the contrary, I stated last year that I had no confidence in the promises that were made on behalf of the Government by one of the Ministers; but I have a strong faith that our leader will be able to succeed where the Government are sure to fail. I have full confidence in my party, and not only in the leader of my party, but in his lieutenants. I oppose this Bill precisely because I feel that if we were to pass it to-day, it would put an end to all possible chance of re-establishing separate schools in Manitoba.

Mr. Laurier, Hansard 2872—I am certainly in favour of remedial legislation; but where I differ is with regard to the methods to be adopted and the procedure to be adopted. I desire the removal of these grievances, but I desire also a proper investigation into the facts before we act.

Mr. Langelier (Quebec) Hansard 2982—There is a most important point, in my judgement, and it is why I cannot agree with my hon. friend, the member for Berthier (Mr. Beausoliel). I consider as disastrous to the interests of the Catholic minority the interference now proposed by the Government. They want to allure that minority by the last section of the Bill. By that famous section they want to allure the Catholic people and induce them to accept this Bill. They say to the minority: It is quite true that this Bill will give you nothing. but the principle will have been accepted, and, later on, we will pass a good Bill giving you all what you claim. The Ministers would not dare to state that in this House, but it is what is being done. Is the hon. Postmaster-General willing to state that this is only the beginning and that the Bill will be completed later on? If he is willing to make such a statement, I am willing for my part to vote for the Bill.

Mr. Langelier, Hansard 2986—This Bill is simply a mockery. By the last section, the minority are made to believe that this is only the beginning of the measures of justice, and that later on, this shapeless Bill, this abortion of legislation will be completed. This is only an allurement of which we must beware. By adopting this Bill, we would make worse the position of the Catholic minority in Manitoba in favor of whom we may now make an appeal to all reasonable men among the Protestants of the whole Dominion.

Mr. Rinfret, Hansard 3154—We, as Catholics, Sir, have no right to turn a deaf ear to the prayers and entreaties of the Manitoba Catholics, and that is the reason why I hailed with delight the Order in Council of the 19th March, 1895, which recognizes that the minority had: (1) The right to build, maintain, equip, conduct and support their Separate Schools; (2) The right to share proportionately in any grant made out of the public funds for the purpose of education; (3) The right of exemption of such Roman Catholics as contributed to Roman Catholic schools from all payment and contribution towards the support of any other schools. I have, on several occasions, publicly expressed my adhesion to that Order in Council, both on the public platform and in the press. I would have at the session of 1895, willingly supported and given the support of my vote to a fair, sincere and practical enforcement of that Order in Council. I would again have been ready to give it my best support, at this session. Now, Sir, if I think it my duty to vote against the Bill which is now before the House, the reason is that, in my humble opinion, it will not secure an honest, fair and practical enforcement of the enactments of the Order in Council I have just quoted, and also because it can in no way remedy the grievances complained of by the Catholic minority nor will it restore to them the rights and privileges they have been so unjustly deprived of.

Mr. Carroll, Hansard 3211 — Mr. Speaker, I am against this law, because it is going to cause irritation without relieving the minority. I am against this law, because I think it is an appeal to expediency. I am against this law because I think it is the death-blow to the French language in the province of Manitoba. I am against this law because I do not think that this Government, even if they were sincere, could render justice to the minority while they command—oh, no, they do not command—the Tory phalanx behind them. Sir, I am in favor of the policy of the leader of the Oi position, because I believe it will result in the settlement of this question to the satisfaction of the minority, without disturbing the peace of the coun-

try. We are a united party in support of that policy. We want an inquiry, which is the legal and constitutional way to proceed. We want an inquiry; and we want the intervention of this parliament, if Mr. Greenway is deaf to all sense of justice, as hon. gentlemen opposite seem to think.

Mr. Monet, Hansard 3352—But what we had to fear, what he feared himself at Sohmer Park, was that this law, drafted by the Orangemen of the Ministry, could give no satisfaction to the episcopacy, and to the Catholic minority of Manitoba. The position is not changed in regard to the law. We do not find that it affords as much justice and security as we could give ourselves to the Manitoba minority. What we do want is a constitutional law, an operative law, a law so framed as to mete out justice to a minority whose rights have been overlooked for over five years by the present Government. We want an operative law, which may later on be modified. That cannot be brought about without political evolution which will bring into power men strongly determined to deal to the minority full justice.

Mr. Legris. (Translation).—The Government refuse to promise to accept these amendments or any other to the same effect. Let them say that they will amend this Bill, and I will vote for its second reading. Otherwise, I will find it my duty to vote for the amendment moved by the hon. leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Bruneau—I repeat it again, so that the stand I take on the question may be clearly understood; I am in favor of separate schools. Had I lived previous to 1837, I would have insisted upon Great Britain fully recognizing in all their integrity the rights of French Canadians. Now we have to deal with the Catholic minority in Manitoba, and I wish to secure for that minority the full recognition of their constitutional rights. In concluding my remarks, sir, I declare that I shall vote against the Bill, because I believe it to be ultra vires; because it would prove to be a source of litigation for the Catholic minority; because it is incomplete and does not render justice to our fellow-countrymen, but causes them to lose the rights which they enjoyed previous to 1890; because admittedly it is not a direct interference by this Parliament; because it is inoperative in its main provisions; the sanction being left to a hostile government, because, with a view to a settlement of this question, I have more confidence in the patriotic and wise course pursued by the hon. leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Charbonneau, Hansard 4221—I hope, Mr. Speaker, that in raising the point I now submit to the House, my position will not be interpreted as showing ill-will on my part towards the Manitoba minority or as meaning a refusal to render justice to them. I do not deem it necessary, under the circumstances, having to deal with this unconstitutional measure, to make any declaration of sympathies in this relation. However, I may say that if I can by my vote, my influence or my words, help in the slightest way, the Manitoba minority to be reintegrated into its rights I will always be happy to do so.

Mr. Laurier, in his famous Chicoutimi speech said :—

"I thank God there are no Orangemen among us Liberals."

Last Provincial Election in Manitoba.

Total vote polled	25,507
Liberal votes	11,178
Patrons	2,680
Independents	930
Conservatives	10,719
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Liberals got less than half the popular vote and owe their majority largely to the gerrymandered condition of the provincial constituencies and enormously corrupt practices of their paid officials.

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