

THE WOODSTOCK DISPATCH.

WOODSTOCK, N. B., MARCH 11, 1896.

AS OTHERS SEE US.

The immigration policy of the present government has certainly not been crowned with success. This will be admitted by all fair minded people. Indeed something must surely be wrong, when a conservative, Mr. Nicholas Flood Davin, member for West Assiniboia in the House of Commons puts a notice of motion on the paper to the effect "that the North-West territories shall be treated in a different footing from that heretofore; that the climate, soil and condition generally of the North-West are different from those of other parts of Canada, and a policy specially adapted to its needs and resources is called for in order that the settlers shall be rendered prosperous and immigration policies be made effective."

Mr. Davin is a supporter of the administration on general principles, but he is not enamoured of its policy with regard to the territories, and he probably represents the sentiments of a majority of his constituents.

The North-West Territories have now an assembly, which seems to be, in everything but name, similar to the assembly of other provinces, but Mr. Davin wants the North-West Territories converted to a province. He does not want several provinces created, and he finds, unhappily, an illustration of the weakness of small provinces, in that portion of Canada which borders on the Atlantic. Mr. Davin says: "We see the folly of having small provinces down by the Atlantic. We do not want petty provinces. Every statesman from the maritime provinces with whom I have discussed this subject has admitted it would be a good thing to have Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island all in one. It would be foolish to look forward to Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Alberta being made into separate provinces. The only persons who will clamour for that are people who have moneyed interests in certain towns. You will get a few people in Calgary to clamour for making Alberta a province, a few people in Regina to clamour for making Assiniboia a province, and a few people in Prince Albert to urge that the Saskatchewan district be made a province. Everybody knows that you cannot expect to have in those territories, for many a year, such a dense population as would justify the existence of three or four provinces there."

We are too conservative in these provinces to change our methods, but our many petty legislatures will not be all useless, if they afford an object lesson for the new provinces of the west.

TOO MANY LAW-MAKERS.

There is one complaint which has never been made with regard to this country and that is, that we are not sufficiently governed. Sometimes the quality of our legislators is criticized, but the quantity, never. According to a rough estimate we have in Canada between seven and eight hundred legislators, counting the dominion and provincial parliaments. Deduct about 150 who are senators and legislative councillors, and it leaves a body of men, numbering 600 who are elected by the people to look after the interests of a country with a population of 5,000,000. The United Kingdom has a population of 40,000,000, and 670 elective members of parliament. We have about five members to every one in the old country. We, also, pay our legislators quite handsomely, while there they have to look after their own means of livelihood, and our bill comes quite heavy. Nevertheless, it is not seriously considered in a comparatively new and undeveloped country, that we can expect men to serve us for nought, but in all seriousness we think the number might be reduced, without imperilling the public service. All along the line, city and town councils are cutting down their size, and as before noted in this paper the Ontario legislature is making provision whereby the county councils in that progressive province can be reduced in bulk.

As we hope for increased population, the disproportion of our public men to private citizens may not seem so marked, but we are afraid there will be a tendency to enlarge as the population increases.

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THAT VEXED QUESTION.

Debate on The Remedial Bill in The Commons.

On the afternoon of the 3rd inst, Sir Chas. Tupper moved the second reading of the Remedial Bill (Manitoba). Mr. Laurier followed and at the close of his address moved the six month's hoist. An epitome of the speeches made by the two leaders is here given.

Sir Charles began his remarks by giving a brief sketch of Canadian history from the time that the idea of confederation was first actively suggested. Confederation would never have been accomplished except for the acceptance of a proposal of Sir Alexander Galt's, then the representative of the Protestants of Quebec, with a view to the protection of the rights of the minorities, whether Catholic or Protestant. The British North America act provided that a province should legislate exclusively on educational matters, except as otherwise set forth. Minorities, whether Catholic or Protestant, were given a guarantee of their educational rights, including an appeal to federal authority and the right of the parliament of Canada to pass remedial laws. Once the right of the minorities was infringed upon and an appeal was made to the federal authority, and the provincial authority declined to redress the grievances complained of, then ipso facto the federal parliament was seized of the right to legislate on this subject. He proceeded to quote at considerable length from the judgment of the privy council to show that the Manitoba legislature denuded itself exclusively on the question of education, and the duty was imposed on the central government of the dominion to legislate in this case. But it might be contended that the duty of parliament was not definite, that they "might" make laws and "should" not make them. If that view were pressed, it was a contention which would be unworthy of the government of any civilized country. He trusted, therefore, no one would hide behind a subterfuge like that. He repeated that not only was this provision made at confederation for the protection of the rights of minorities, but what was more, it was made at the request of the Protestants for the protection of Protestants. He asked whether the peace and harmony of the country was to be disturbed by this unfortunate question being allowed to be thrust upon it. Was a small minority in Manitoba to be deprived of rights guaranteed to them by an imperial statute? The Canadian who, with the history of the past or present before him, would do anything to foment a war of races was an enemy of Canada. This was not simply a question of separate schools; it was a question of the constitution of the country. It was a question of sacredly maintaining those rights, guaranteed under the constitution.

Continuing, he said: In framing this bill the government, while doing substantial justice to the rights of the minority, have been careful to enroach as little as possible upon the local government. No person can read this bill without seeing on the very face of it that it is not proposed that the government of Canada should take action under even this bill, by the appointment of a board, the appointment of the superintendents, the guarantee that the schools shall be of the same high character as that of the other schools in Manitoba; before all that is done, this bill provides first to invite the government of the province of Manitoba to take action, and it is only when they refuse, and when the unpleasant and disagreeable duty is forced by the act of the imperial parliament upon the Dominion of Canada, that this government proposes, in the least degree, to interfere with this matter. The coercion comes not from the dominion government. There is not a line of coercion to be found in the bill from beginning to end. There is a simple, a most easy and natural provision to meet the interests of these people whose consciences deprive them of the opportunity of making use of such schools in Manitoba as they are now taxed to sustain.

Under these circumstances the government have been compelled to adopt the policy which they have adopted. I need not say that they have adopted this policy in the face of great difficulty, because it is always an extremely unpleasant thing for any government to find itself in a position in which there is a single member of their great political party that does not see eye to eye with them. In the face of even this difficulty the government have felt compelled, in justice to their own position and in regard to their duty to the country, as imposed by the imperial act, to take the step they have taken. They have taken that step in the most moderate and temperate manner that was possible to be devised, and even down to the present hour they have been open to any suggestion by which the responsibility which is imposed upon them under the circumstances could be removed.

Mr. Laurier in opening, said that during his long parliamentary career never did he rise with a greater sense of security, never did he feel so strong in the consciousness of right as he did now, at this anxious moment, when in the name of peace and harmony in this land, when in the name of the minority which this bill pretends to help, when in the name of this young nation in which so many hopes are centred, he rose to ask this Parliament not to proceed any further with this bill. He pointed out that the burden of Sir Charles Tupper's speech was that the government in this instance are not free agents, but simply creatures of necessity, the tools, the instruments of the constitution, which, in this matter, leaves them no option, but compels them to bring forward the measure which they have not brought to the attention of the House. He accused Sir Charles Tupper of having practically coerced Nova Scotia into confederation, and thus aroused a spirit of discontent, which was only now beginning to disappear. He thought it would be misery if we had civil and religious war in this country, but if religious war is to be brought in this country by whose action will it be brought but by the action of this government, which, although it had the methods of persuasion in its hands, had chosen to take the methods of coercion in order to redress a wrong? There is one thing that is certain at this moment. The attention of the people from

all parts of the country is upon this matter, and whatever may be our opinion upon this question, whatever views we may hold as to the policy of the government, there is one thing which cannot be denied. These frequent recurrences of agitations and commotion are a severe strain, upon the tie which binds these provinces together. And the danger is all the more to be apprehended as, searching further for the causes which have brought about this commotion, you find that on every occasion there was one excuse, and that was the feature of our constitution which abridges the independence or sovereignty of the legislatures. He continued—Without having made any investigation, are we to be told that the law of the majority is to be set aside? If you tell me this, then I say it was a mere mockery to give to the province of Manitoba the right to legislate upon this question. It is true that honorable gentlemen say that they stand upon the constitution and I rest the case on the judgment of every Canadian, of all men who believe that above the constitution, nay, not above the constitution, but in it, incorporated in every word and syllable of it, there are to be found those laws of eternal truth and justice on which alone nations can be founded. It is granted that the legislature of Manitoba has the right to legislate in matters of education, establish separate schools and the right to abolish separate schools. This is not denied. Somebody says no; the judicial committee of the privy council says yes. They have decided that the legislature had a right to pass that legislation of 1890. The constitution also says that although the Manitoba legislature had the right to pass that act the minority has an appeal to this government and to this parliament; but again I assert that if you tell me that this appeal is to be granted as a matter of course without an enquiry, without an investigation whatever, I repeat what I said a moment ago, that it was a most fatal gift to place in the hands of the province this power of legislation on education. Mr. Laurier said the minority in Manitoba, who complained that their consciences have been violated and outraged, had the right to redress but there was one condition—there must be inquiry and investigation. It may seem invidious in a man of my creed and race that I should assail the basis of this bill. I do so because I believe that the minority have a strong case to present to the people of Canada whenever they have a chance to do so, and I do not want their case to rest on falsehoods of any kind. Let the truth prevail and I believe it will appeal to the heart and conscience of any man, no matter his creed and race, but I do not want the case to go on the false facts represented by honorable gentlemen opposite. What I would investigate is precisely what is alleged in the petitions of the Roman Catholic minority, and among the things that are alleged in this petition are these:—First, that there was a compact made between them and the crown of England as represented by the government of Canada, whereby their schools were guaranteed to them; second, that the system of common schools is repugnant to their consciences; third, that schools established in Manitoba, though nominally public schools, are in reality Protestant schools. These are the things to be investigated, these are the things on which the Roman Catholic minority have all along been basing their claim. What are we to conclude from all this? We are to conclude that the Roman Catholic minority of Manitoba has a grievance against the Province of Manitoba, and have a right to appeal to this government. It is undoubted that the minority have the grievance, it is undoubted that they have the right to appeal, and that this government has jurisdiction to hear the appeal. This government has jurisdiction to pass remedial orders, and this Parliament has the right to pass remedial legislation. But what I contend is that before this remedial order and this legislation are passed all the facts connected with these claims of the minority should be investigated, so as to give the government and Parliament of Canada something to act upon. Until this is done, I say the government cannot act in this matter without putting themselves in a false position. Not many weeks ago I was told from high quarters in the church to which I belong that unless I supported the school bill which was then being prepared by the government, and which we have now before us, I would incur the hostility of a great and powerful body. Sir, this is too grave a phase of this question for me to pass by in silence. I have only to say, even though I have threats coming from high dignitaries in the church to which I belong, bitterness shall never pass my lips as against the church. I respect and I love it, but, sir, I am not of that school which has long dominated France and other countries of continental Europe which refuse ecclesiastics the right of having a voice in public affairs. No, I am a Liberal of the English school. I believe in that school which has all along claimed that it is the privilege of all subjects, whether high or low, whether rich or poor, whether ecclesiastic or laymen, to participate in the administration of public affairs; to discuss, to influence, to persuade, to convince, but which has always denied even to the highest the right to dictate even to the lowest. I am here not representing Roman Catholics alone, but Protestants as well, and I must give an account of my stewardship to all classes. Here am I, a Roman Catholic of French extraction, entrusted by the confidence of the men who sit around me with great and important duties under our constitutional system of government. I am here the acknowledged leader of that great party composed of Roman Catholics and Protestants as well, in which Protestants must be in the majority as in every party. I to be told, I, occupying such a position, that I am to be dictated to as to the course I am to take in this House by reasons that can appeal to the consciences of my fellow Catholic members, but which do not appeal as well to the consciences of my Protestant colleagues. No, so long as I have a seat in this House, so long as I occupy the position I do now, whenever it shall become my duty to take a stand upon any question whatever, that stand I will take, not from the point of view of Roman Catholicism, but from a point of view which can appeal to the consciences of all men irrespective of their faith; from the point of view of men who love justice, freedom and toleration.



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