

and it was a significant fact that nobody had been found mean enough to make an appeal against a Roman Catholic because he had not given notice. Was not this a proof that they had acted fairly and gentlemanly—that they were acting in a neighborly and friendly way one toward another—that the Protestant majority did not care whether Roman Catholics gave notice or not, so long as they were voluntarily supporting their schools, that was all that they concerned themselves about. They did not ask for the amendment of 1879. As a matter of fact, in 99 cases out of 100, probably in almost all cases, the assessor was a Protestant, and being a Protestant he knew who the Public School supporters were. He would ask anybody who knew the condition of affairs—he would ask the hon. gentleman himself—whether the state of affairs was not practically that every Roman Catholic, with very rare exceptions, was known to be a Separate School supporter in the municipality within which he resided.

Mr. Meredith—I have no knowledge; I cannot say.

Mr. Fraser—I say that this was so in nearly every case. This was the state of affairs when this assessment law was passed in 1879. If they had the same regard, he contended, to the interests of the Roman Catholic body that they had for interests of the Wesleyan, the Presbyterian, the Baptist body or the Church of England, they would not attempt such legislation as this, for they knew it would not be tolerated by the vast masses affected by it. Mr. Fraser then, at considerable length, quoted from the reports of THE GLOBE and The Mail of the debate in Committee when the Act of 1879 was before the House. The report read:—

“Mr. O’Sullivan moved an amendment to the bill providing that every Roman Catholic should be deemed ipso facto a Separate School supporter, and that notice in writing should be required to be given by a Roman Catholic rate-payer before school taxes levied upon his property should be applied in aid of Public Schools?” The report of his (Mr. Fraser’s) speech read:—“He desired that nothing should appear in the Act which might be claimed as unconstitutional. The fundamental principle of the Separate School was that it was permissive.” It was clear that Dr. O’Sullivan thought that notice was still requisite, and that he (Mr. Fraser) did not say anything to the contrary. The report of the debate proceeded.

“Mr. White was somewhat surprised that the Commissioner of Public Works should discourage the motion of the hon. member for East Peterborough. He was not sure that it required an amendment to the Assessment Act, and if necessary he suggested that the consideration of the present bill should be postponed. In any case he submitted that there was nothing asked for but what was fair and reasonable and he believed the House was prepared to grant it.

“Mr. Sinclair said the idea of allowing any person to support the Separate Schools if he wished simply meant that persons who cared nothing for the principle would support that school when the taxes would be lightest. Mr. Crooks (who was the Minister for Education at the time) said this would elevate the Separate School system into a rival of the Public Schools. The British North America Act provided that existing privileges of Separate School supporters should be continued, but this amendment would make the Separate School compulsory.” The principle of Separate Schools, Mr. Fraser continued, after reading the above extracts, whether Protestant or Catholic, was simply permissive, and he was not prepared to go so far as to guarantee any support to them. His contention was that not only should every Roman Catholic be regarded as a Separate School supporter, but that he should not be regarded as a Public School supporter unless he gave notice. He was only in favor of an alteration of the law so far as the change was required by public necessity. It was necessary to provide some machinery for distinguishing between Roman Catholic School supporters and Public School supporters; and the machinery which was provided in the bill introduced by the Minister for Education was the simplest and the most fair. He denied that there had ever been a single utterance of his made which could be construed into a contention that the Separate Schools should be compulsory; and the hon. gentleman must have misunderstood the position he (Mr. Fraser) had taken up when he said what he did in his speech at London. If the House were willing, and there was no objection by anybody to the provision, that every Roman Catholic should be compelled to be a Separate School supporter, he would oppose

on the ground that the Legislature was assuming a prerogative that might eventually lead to the abolition of the Separate Schools. There was one other bill he would refer to—that relating to High School Trustees. The Separate School supporters were not very much concerned about that bill. It was never asked for by priest or bishop. Some of us thought it would be a good thing, however, to interest them more largely in the High Schools. If this House were of opinion that the privilege given of electing a High School Trustee as well as a School Board should not, as yielding to popular clamor, cant and hypocrisy, be taken away from the Separate Schools no objection would be raised. At the same time he would be greatly disappointed if they did that, for the House was hardly likely to take away from the Separate Schools a privilege that did nobody any harm. Moreover, wherever there was a High School in existence every Roman Catholic must pay taxes in support of it, and it was thought that the power of voting for the High School Trustees would interest the Roman Catholics more in these institutions, and the result proved that they were right. If the Protestant majority of this country thought this should not be continued, by all means let it be taken away; but if the House decided to do so he did not think it would be acting in the best interests of the country, in the best interests of the High Schools, or in the best interests of the cause of higher education. There was nothing the Roman Catholics held more dear than the Separate Schools, and if the House passed a law abolishing them there would still be Separate Schools. What, after all, did they get towards their support? They got about \$18,000, about 60 cents for each pupil in the Roman Catholic Separate Schools. What was that amongst them? His hon. friend had shown that in this small contribution there was some connection between Church and State because there was religious teaching in the schools; but if there was a violation of the law in this respect as regards these schools there was an equal violation so far as the Public Schools were concerned. Undoubtedly there was religious teaching given in the Separate Schools; that was the reason for their existence. If Roman Catholics did not intend to give their children religious education they would not ask for this system. It was, so far as religion was concerned, so far as the great hereafter was concerned, that they asked for this Separate School system. As regards the connection between Church and State there was just as much of it in the case of the one class of schools as in the other. He was surprised that the Protestant bodies did not unite and have a great deal more religion taught in their Public Schools than there was now, where nobody’s convictions could be in any way endangered. He was talking now of the great centres, where there were Roman Catholic Schools, and where the Public Schools were attended by exclusively Protestant children. He was surprised that there was not more religion taught in the Public Schools in such places than there was to-day. He asked the pardon of the House for having detained it so long. He had endeavored to

put the case on behalf of those for whom he spoke as fairly as he could, and he hoped in doing so he had not given offence to any class. He concluded by expressing the hope that the time may never come in the Province of Ontario when the people would be called upon to deal with the question of the abolition of the Separate Schools. His hon. friend had put the case before the public in three or four general elections and he had failed every time, and he (Mr. Fraser) would venture to predict that he would find the same thing true on this occasion. He hoped the great Protestant majority of this country would not be led by hypocrisy and cant, nor allow the ship of State to pass into the hands of any man who was willing to give up the opinions and convictions he had expressed in former days in order that he might gain possession of the Treasury benches. (Loud cheers.)