

THE MINORITY AND THE BALLOT BOX:

A Study of the Voting Behaviour

of the French Canadians

of Manitoba

1888-1967

by Roger E. Turenne

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To Professor Tom Peterson for his counsel, criticism, and three years of patience;

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C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I. 1870-1888
FIRST STIRRINGS OF PARTISANSHIP 11

CHAPTER II. 1889-1896
THE SCHOOL QUESTION ELECTIONS PART I
A Political Wilderness 25

CHAPTER III. 1897-1899
THE SCHOOL QUESTION ELECTIONS PART II
The Laurier-Greenway Compromise 36

CHAPTER IV. 1900-1914
THE MINORITY AND THE MACHINE 58

CHAPTER V. 1915-1922
THE TURNING POINT 96

CHAPTER VI. 1923-1957
THE LONG SLEEP: THE "NON-POLITICAL YEARS" 114

CHAPTER VII. 1958-1967
THE ROBLIN ERA: THE PERSISTENCE OF HABIT 138

CONCLUSION 165

APPENDIXES 169

BIBLIOGRAPHY 182

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Results of the July 11, 1888 general election	21
2. Comparison of the 1896-97 and 1899 election results	56
3. Results of the July 20, 1903 general election	70
4. Percentage of the popular vote in the three constituencies under study during the "partisan era"	76
5. Election results in Provencher federal constituency: 1900-1917	79
6. Results of Liberal and Conservative vote in French Canadian polls in constituencies other than the three under study: July 10, 1914 and August 6, 1915	92
7. First-ballot election results in the "French Quarter" of St. Boniface constituency: 1927-1953	123
8. Results of Liberal and Conservative vote in French Canadian polls in constituencies other than the three under study: June 16, 1958 and May 14, 1959	142

I N T R O D U C T I O N

One may perhaps wonder why the study of the electoral behaviour of a small minority group of sixty thousand¹ is of any relevance in a country of twenty million people. In fact, if this minority were an isolated one like the Doukhobours or the Icelandic community, the just or unjust treatment accorded to it by the majority and its survival or assimilation would cause no more than a few ripples on the pages of Canadian history. The French Canadian minorities outside of Quebec, however, have to be put in a category apart. They have traditionally been regarded by the French Canadians of Quebec as a "weather vane" of Confederation, as a test of the English-speaking majority's respect for the "moral pact" of Confederation. However untenable the legal basis of the "Compact Theory of Confederation" may be, it is hard to refute the existence of this "moral pact." In the words of Professors Corry and Hodgetts:

If we speak in moral rather than strict legal terms, there is ground for saying that Confederation was a compact between the two races, English and French, which agreed to associate together in the Dominion of Canada on terms of mutual tolerance and respect.²

¹The 1961 Census gives the total population of French ethnic origin in Manitoba as 83,936 while the number whose mother tongue is French was given as 60,899. (Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1961 Census of Canada, Bulletin 1.2 - 9, "Mother Tongue," page 19.) This last figure is the only significant one for purposes of identifying the "French Community" in Manitoba.

²J. A. Corry and J. E. Hodgetts, Democratic Government and Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), page 582.

The basis of the "moral pact" lies in the fact that "the most important reason for a federal union rather than a unitary one was that a unitary state was entirely unacceptable to the French-speaking Canadians."³ The moral pact can also be seen through guarantees to the Ontario French minority and in the Manitoba Act of 1870. Its main importance and relevance is that Confederation was believed to have been a pact, not only by most French Canadians but also by a good many English-speaking Canadians.

It is of little wonder, therefore, that many of the crises and conflicts that have threatened to tear Canada apart in the past have originated in the ill treatment of French Canadian minorities outside Quebec and especially in Manitoba. The first instances centered on Louis Riel: the refusal to grant him amnesty, his expulsion from the House of Commons in 1874 and, more important, his hanging in 1885. Separate schools, looked upon by French Canadians as the lynchpin of the moral pact of Confederation, were abolished in New Brunswick in 1871, in Manitoba in 1890, and with the establishment of the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905.

In 1915, Ontario's Regulation 17 directly attacked the largest of the French minorities by banning their language from most of their schools and, the following year, bilingualism was abolished in the Manitoba schools. These, in turn, contributed to the Conscription Crisis of 1917: thousands of Quebecers were persuaded by the Ontario and Manitoba actions that they had no cause to give their lives to a country seeking their assimilation.

Confederation's second half-century was, until recently, less

³Ibid., page 582.

crisis-ridden partly because French rights were virtually extinguished outside Quebec, and partly because the latter retreated into protective isolation. The 1960's, however, saw Quebec coming out of this partly self-imposed, partly forced isolation. The Québécois no longer accept a country where full language rights in all areas are the privilege of the English-speaking, with French having droit de cité only in Quebec. Such a situation stifles the Québécois' full participation in Canadian life. Upon being promoted to the Winnipeg branch of his company, for example, he would be faced with the choice of either refusing the promotion or having his children assimilated in all-English schools.

Thus, French Canadian minorities have an importance beyond their numbers. They are the minimum "local contingents" around which the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism proposes the establishment of "bilingual districts" where some degree of French language, French schooling, and French culture can be maintained across the land. In the words of the Commission: ". . . They have formed a bond for the French Canadians of the Province of Quebec with the rest of Canada."⁴ It is by making use of this bond that Pierre Elliott Trudeau proposes to hold the nation together. That is not to say, however, that all Québécois are seeking this particular avenue out of isolation. There is another way: that of becoming a majority in a small country rather than a minority in a large one. It is noteworthy that both approaches hinge on the status of French Canadian minorities. Separatists invariably insist that they are "dead ducks"⁵ and the

⁴Canada, A Preliminary Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1965), page 119.

⁵The words are René Lévesque's on the C.B.C. programme "Twenty

federalists, that they are not.

In this context, the purpose here will be to study one aspect (electoral behaviour) of the political struggle for survival by the French minority in Manitoba. One question to be answered concerns the extent to which the minority status of the Franco-Manitobans influenced their vote, and whether this consideration was more important than the economic, political, and social conditions shared with the majority. The social structure of the minority, especially the role of the religious hierarchy, will be examined for its influence on the minority's ballot box behaviour. The most important question to be answered, perhaps, is the extent to which a beleaguered minority can successfully participate in, and pursue its goals through, the democratic electoral process. If the majority is hostile, political parties will tend to make use of this hostility for political purposes; when this is the case, the minority might react by rationalising its support of unsympathetic parties or by withdrawing from the mainstream of politics in the province. For several decades, party politics were absent from the Manitoba scene and the minority's status in this situation will be examined. Also studied will be the extent to which a minority's capacity to act democratically and to be flexible in its response to various situations is dependent upon a degree of tolerance and respect on the part of the majority.

Evidence is to be drawn mainly from the provincial constituencies which have consistently been dominated by the French Canadians:

Million Questions" in October, 1968. See also the chapters on minorities in M. Chaput, Pourquoi je suis séparatiste (Montreal: Editions du Jour, 1961); and M. Barbeau, J'ai choisi l'indépendance (Montreal: Editions du Jour, 1962).

St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Carillon. These three are the oldest in the province. Geographically, they remained virtually unchanged between 1879 and 1966.⁶ Appendix D shows the boundaries in effect for the first and the last of the elections studied (1888 and 1966). During the period in between, the alterations were minor and usually limited to the inclusion or exclusion of certain areas on the east or west side of the Red River. Many of these changes were no more than trade-offs between Carillon and La Vérendrye or between La Vérendrye and St. Boniface and did not affect the racial composition of these constituencies. Ethnically, St. Boniface and La Vérendrye still had French majorities in 1966 while in Carillon the French formed the largest group.⁷ The electoral importance of the French in the sister constituencies of Carillon and La Vérendrye is more than their numbers would indicate because the non-French element is made up of Mennonites

⁶Carillon disappeared in the 1969 redistribution. The 1969 election, however, is not covered in this thesis.

⁷Figures cannot be determined precisely. The "French quarter" of St. Boniface, made up of census tracts 49 and 50, is 68% French. (Canada, D. B. S., General population characteristics by census tracts, Census Metropolitan Area of Winnipeg, 1961). This area includes more than two-thirds of St. Boniface constituency (1957 - 1966) and the rest, although non-French in the majority, has a substantial French-speaking element. Approximately four-fifths of the residents of Carillon and La Vérendrye constituencies are in Subdivisions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Census Division No. 1 which gives the French population as 35.2% of the total (Canada, D. B. S., Population by specified ethnic groups, for census subdivisions, 1961). Of the 9013 French, some 5000 were in La Vérendrye and 4000 in Carillon. Since the former was the smaller constituency, the French made up about half the population and their relatively higher turnout meant that they cast between 50 and 60 per cent of the ballots. Carillon, however, has not been "dominated" by the French since the 1940's. Approximately 19,500 of the 60,899 French-speaking Manitobans are in the constituencies under study. This figure is arrived at by adding the figures for the above-mentioned census areas and making educated guesses for parts of the constituencies not covered by them.

who have traditionally made little use of their franchise.⁸ This has become less true today, however. Containing approximately one-third of the French population in the province these three constituencies contain a fairly representative sampling of Franco-Manitobans. In cases where this might not be representative, other French-speaking areas will be studied. The fact that one of the constituencies is urban (St. Boniface) and the other two are rural also offers the opportunity to study the urban and rural contrast in reactions to some problems.

To place the electoral studies in context, the following are a few general observations on the French community in Manitoba. Upon the entry of Manitoba in Confederation, the French-speaking population consisted almost exclusively of Métis settled in "reserves" set out for them along the main rivers. Many of these shortly moved to the North-West. Those who stayed were quickly outnumbered, and some of them assimilated, by the French Canadian colonists from Quebec and French New England who were brought to Manitoba by Mgr. Taché's French Colonisation Aid Society.⁹ Unlike later British and other immigrants who settled around grain elevators next to a railway track, the French Canadians and Métis would cluster around a church next to the Red River and its tributaries. Along the Red stood St. Boniface, St. Norbert, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe, St. Jean-Baptiste and Letellier. Along the Seine stood Lorette, Ste. Anne-des-Chênes, Thibaultville (now Giroux) and

⁸An article in the Daily Nor'Wester, January 9, 1896, commented: "In speaking today of the coming elections, a prominent businessman from Steinbach remarked 'It is no use canvassing among the Mennonites. They won't vote. In some years from now when the present leaders--who are averse to voting--are replaced by younger men you may try us, but now we won't vote. Now, that is all.'"

⁹Dom Benoit, Vie de Mgr Taché (Montreal, 1904), II, pp. 285-86.

La Broquerie. Otterburne, St. Pierre, La Rochelle, and St. Malo were on the Rat River. St. Charles and St. Francois-Xavier were on the Assiniboine while St. Eustache, Elie, and La Salle were on the La Salle River. Later on, a new cluster of settlements would be established on the open plain in the area known as la montagne to the southwest of Winnipeg. There were relatively few isolated towns such as St. Georges in the east and Grande-Clairière, Dunrea, and St. Lazare in the west. This geographic concentration helped the French resist assimilation.

For all practical purposes, their communities were, and are, exclusively Catholic. The few French Protestants could have found no place in a community whose every social activity had some religious overtone or sponsorship. Most of the recruitment of colonists was by priests who claimed that a homestead on the prairies was the best place to raise a "large (Catholic) family."¹⁰ Furthermore, since the French, in spite of their increasing numbers, comprised a diminishing proportion of the total population, more and more of their workaday activities, especially in St. Boniface, were carried on in English, leaving French to religious activities and thus further associating the two. As recently as ten years ago, one of the favorite slogans of the French community was "La langue est la gardienne de la foi", a warning that whosoever adopted the language of the majority would in all probability adopt its religion as well. French was even referred to as "la langue catholique". Thus, the parish priest, and not the mayor, was usually the most influential person in town.

Like most devout Catholic societies, the Manitoba French have

¹⁰A. G. Morice, Vie de Mgr Langevin (St. Boniface, 1916), page 181.

been affected by the authoritarian structure of their church and as a consequence have an "elitist" tendency in politics and social organisation: a belief that some are "called upon" to lead and others to follow. Their status in the province reinforced this tendency: persecuted minorities cannot always afford the luxuries of democratic dissent. This trait might explain the fact that, in the French constituencies under study, the same candidates, win or lose, run in election after election.

Yet, they were also a pioneer people in a frontier land with all the personal independence and initiative that frontier conditions encouraged. Thus, if they respected their priests and bishops, they would not always follow them blindly. What to outside observers might seem to be "clerical domination" often turns out to be a case of the clergy assessing the direction of the crowd then stepping up front saying "Follow me !" As Mgr. Langevin discovered shortly after the start of his episcopate, the French Catholics of Manitoba never accepted the notion that clerical garb automatically made one an expert on social and political questions. Clerical leadership was nevertheless important, if only as a result of the absence, or poor quality, of lay leadership. This, in turn, has had two causes: on the one hand, prominent Franco-Manitobans who "have arrived" in their particular occupations, finding their impeccable bilingualism financially useless in Manitoba, are very often attracted to Ottawa or Montreal by the federal government or business enterprises in need of bilingual and competent personnel.¹¹ On the other hand, the inferiority complexes engendered by the Franco-Manitobans' minority status has made them suspicious and often

¹¹This has happened on such a scale that "Franco-Manitoban Clubs" now thrive in both Ottawa and Montreal.

jealous of those among them who succeed outside the immediate confines of the village or north St. Boniface. Such persons, especially if they are susceptible to being labelled "intellectuals," invariably meet defeat in elections.

The Manitoba French Catholic community was, and still is, a predominantly rural one (54% to 46%).¹² Even in the city it is "rural-minded." When the great migration to the cities began after World War I, northern St. Boniface, a "small town" in the midst of Metropolitan Winnipeg, was there to receive the French Catholic migrants. The "French quarter" of St. Boniface, bordered by the Red River, the C.P.R. tracks, and Marion St., recreates on a large scale the homogeneity of population and religious-based contacts which has permitted the French community to survive and which is normally characteristic of rural areas. French Canadians who migrate to areas other than St. Boniface --more prone to assimilation in the first place since they did not make the effort to "be with their own"--are soon swallowed in the urban melting pot. A comparison between the "ethnic origin" and "mother tongue" figures for Winnipeg City proper and St. Boniface proves this. Although each city has approximately the same number of Canadians of French origin (13,945 and 14,404 respectively),¹³ more than 46% of those on the Winnipeg side of the Red River claimed English as their "mother tongue" while only 7% did so on the St. Boniface side.¹⁴

¹²Canada, D.B.S., 1961 Census of Canada, 1.2-9, page 21. For all practical purposes, urban and rural can be taken to mean Greater-Winnipeg and non-Greater-Winnipeg since the only other "city" that could qualify as an "urban area," Brandon, has only 1002 French-origin residents (Census Bulletin 1.2-5).

¹³Ibid., 1.2 - 5.

¹⁴Ibid., 1.2 - 9.

In short, the Franco-Manitobans are a compact group, rural or "rural-minded," Catholic and traditionally under clerical leadership yet independent of it. Numbering less than seven per cent of their province's population, they have frequently felt besieged and inferior. But they matter to Canada. The ballots they have cast in the last hundred years say something about them, their province, their country.

CHAPTER I

FIRST STIRRINGS OF PARTISANSHIP

Before 1888, political institutions in Manitoba were inchoate and the party system unsettled. After 1870, the leadership of the French group had quickly passed from the Métis to conservative and ultramontane Canadiens from Quebec, who had been encouraged by Sir G. E. Cartier and Bishop Taché to come out west. Within a few years, Marc Girard, Joseph Royal, Joseph Dubuc, and others were the political representatives, not of the Métis, but of the growing number of émigrés from Quebec and French New England. During provincial elections, in the majority of cases, there were no contests in the French constituencies. Where there was one, either an Anglo-Saxon was pitted against the French candidate, in which case the result tended to reflect the ethnic composition of the riding, or two French candidates were opposed to each other, in which case voting reflected the pro- or anti-government sentiments based on province-wide issues. The prevalence of acclamations was understandable: there were no political parties fielding "full slates" of candidates and there was sufficient unanimity regarding the issues that the French felt no need to oppose their sitting members.

To say that partisanship was slight during Manitoba's first decade, however, is not to say that it was absent: immigrants from Ontario and Quebec brought some of their party loyalties with them. The French were solidly Tory while the British were more fragmented in

their loyalties. But Manitoba's frontier conditions overrode these loyalties and kept them in the background. Federally, the province usually voted for the party with the most chance of forming the government in Ottawa in order to be "on the right side of things," since it was almost totally dependent on Ottawa for its financial survival.

It was inevitable, however, that when conditions became less primitive and the federal parties started organizing in the province, the old loyalties would reassert themselves. Serious debate on the matter first occurred at the time of the ministerial crisis of 1879. At that time, the leader of the French group in the legislature, Joseph Royal, either attempted to pressure Premier Norquay into altering his cabinet or to replace Norquay himself with a certain Captain Scott. Norquay outmanoeuvred him, however, and forced both Royal and his French colleague Delorme to resign their cabinet posts.¹ He then proceeded to form an anti-French government whose first order of business was the abolition of French as an official language, an act subsequently disallowed by the federal government.²

As head of an almost exclusively French opposition facing an exclusively Anglo-Saxon government, Royal saw that political representation based solely on racial lines when the proportion of French-

¹See W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967, 2d ed.); A. Begg, History of the North West (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1895); Réginald Lessard, The French in Manitoba (Public Archives of Manitoba, unpublished manuscript); Le Métis and Manitoba Free Press, April, 1879. Since evidence is contradictory, one can only speculate as to Royal's ultimate goal in initiating the crisis. It has even been suggested that he was out to make himself premier (cf. M. S. Donnelly, The Government of Manitoba, [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963], page 34).

²G. V. Laforest, Disallowance and Reservation of Provincial Legislation (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955).

speaking citizens was decreasing, was to their disadvantage. His group would always end up losing. He saw an alternative in the establishment of political parties. Since a good majority of the French could be expected to vote Conservative, the establishment of Dominion party lines would gain allies for them in the Conservative Anglo-Saxons. They would wield more power being a "majority within a majority." This may have been one of the reasons why the Manitoba Free Press opposed the introduction of party lines in the province; it possibly foresaw that the minority could obtain more concessions from political parties as the price for its bloc support.³

The calling of a general election put a stop to any such plans because the introduction of political parties was a matter of years, not weeks. Thus, when Norquay persuaded Senator (and former premier) Marc Girard to enter the cabinet, his former colleagues acquiesced because they wished to regain access to policy-making. The French also felt they needed "insurance" against further attacks on their language and elected Girard by acclamation in St. Boniface.

Royal and his supporters were not alone in calling for the establishment of Dominion party lines. The first issue of the Winnipeg Daily Times proclaimed itself a Liberal-Conservative paper.⁴ It also seems that the federally Liberal Manitoba Free Press's refusal to recognize a partisan administration in the Norquay government was partly motivated by a desire not to lose lucrative government printing contracts.⁵

³Manitoba Free Press, August 22, 1879.

⁴Winnipeg Daily Times, April 12, 1879. "Liberal-Conservative" was the official name of Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative party.

⁵John Holmes, "Factors Affecting Politics in Manitoba--A Study of the Provincial Elections 1870-1899" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1936), page 40.

In any event, lacking a definite date at which provincial party politics clearly began, the best that can be said is that parties began to emerge during the Norquay administration. As for the French, their support of the government was reinforced by the occasional anti-French rumblings emanating from Greenway's opposition.

At the formative stages of partisanship in Manitoba, there were other factors which gave the French a Conservative tendency in politics. There was the ethno-ultramontane attitude inherited from Quebec, with its fear of the words "liberalism" and "reform." There was the recognized necessity, as a vulnerable group, of co-operation with the government in Winnipeg, in the same way as Manitobans in general recognized the necessity of co-operation with Ottawa. Almost in spite of itself, the party in office in Winnipeg was being turned into a Conservative party, partly because of the need to maintain good relations with the federal Conservatives, and partly because the opposition was increasingly differentiating itself as explicitly Liberal. In 1885, however, the Conservative government in Ottawa let Louis Riel be hanged and, two years later, Wilfrid Laurier became leader of the Liberal Party. Both events increased the appeal of the Liberal party among French Canadians.

The Norquay government also failed to get Ottawa to recognize Manitoba's case in the fight over railway monopoly. Manitobans, both French- and English-speaking, suspected that the label "Conservative" on the Norquay government might have something to do with it; that, perhaps because of some ideological affinity, Norquay might not have pressed Manitoba's case hard enough.⁶ At the same time, there were serious charges of impropriety in the air. These factors combined to

⁶Cf. Donnelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 31ff., and H. R. Ross, Thirty-Five Years in the Limelight (Winnipeg, 1936), p. 35.

make Norquay resign. He was succeeded by one of his ministers, the Hon. D. H. Harrison, and in the by-elections that followed,⁷ one was of particular significance, not only for the French, but for the entire province. Since the Conservatives had a majority of only a few members, two or three by-election defeats might put the Liberals in power without a general election. All by-elections were therefore hotly contested, especially the one in St. François-Xavier where Joseph Burke, the French representative in the new cabinet, was seeking re-election. The French, who were in a majority in the riding, faced the following dilemma: they shared the doubts of other Manitobans as to the integrity of the government and were equally disappointed with its performance in the railway dispute. On the other hand, the incumbent was "one of their own" while his opponent, F. H. Francis, was not only English-speaking, but his election might well put a suspect political party in office.

To allay the fears of French Canadians as to the good intentions of the Liberal party, there were formal pledges made by the future Attorney-General, Joe Martin, to the effect that, if the Liberals came to power, they would fully respect all the rights of the Catholics and the French.⁸ The appeal was successful: Burke and two other ministers were defeated, the government was forced to resign and the Liberals, under Thomas Greenway, assumed office in January, 1888. Partly to keep up tradition, partly in recognition of the French contribution to his victory, and partly to obtain their support in an evenly divided House, Greenway took into his cabinet James E. P. Prendergast, who had run as

⁷Constitutional practice at the time was for new ministers to resign their seats and seek re-election.

⁸Cf. Archbishop A. A. Taché, Une page de l'histoire des écoles de Manitoba (St. Boniface, 1893), page 89; Ross, op. cit., page 36.

a Norquay supporter in 1886.⁹ This was done, in the manner of the times, after Greenway had secretly reiterated to Archbishop Taché the promises made by Martin in order to obtain his nihil obstat.¹⁰

This event set the stage for the first serious manifestation of partisanship among the Franco-Manitobans. On the one side stood the old loyalties and the single French newspaper Le Manitoba edited by A. A. C. La Rivière, M.L.A. for St. Boniface¹¹ and former provincial treasurer in Norquay's cabinet (and therefore the prime target of corruption charges), and on the other side, the new mood of the times and the presence of a French Canadian in the Liberal cabinet with the tacit (and secretly explicit) consent of the Archbishop.

When the new Greenway government took office at the beginning of 1888, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that there would be a general election soon. The political tide was in the government's favor, especially after its success in obtaining a cessation of railway disal-

⁹Prendergast was born in Quebec in 1858 and had come to Manitoba in 1882. He was, for a short time, associate editor of Le Manitoba. He entered the legislature as a government supporter as a result of a by-election in La Vérendrye in 1885. He represented Woodlands from 1886 to 1892, and St. Boniface from 1892 to 1897. Prendergast was mayor of St. Boniface from 1893 to 1896. In 1897, he was appointed county court judge and held various judicial appointments including, from 1930 to his retirement in 1944, that of Chief Justice of Manitoba. In 1916, he became the first president of the Association d'éducation des Canadiens français du Manitoba. He was the father of seventeen children.

¹⁰This was the much-controverted meeting which Greenway fruitlessly tried to disavow later. For a thorough discussion over whether or not the promises were actually made, see R. E. Clague, "The Political Aspects of the Manitoba School Question, 1890-96" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1939), pp. 113-132.

¹¹A. A. C. La Rivière was M.L.A. for St. Boniface from 1878 to 1888, being in turn Provincial Secretary (1881-83), Minister of Agriculture (1883-86) and Provincial Treasurer (1886-87). He entered the House of Commons in 1889 and served until his defeat in 1903. He was also a Senator from 1911 to 1917. La Rivière edited Le Manitoba from 1878 to 1897.

lowance. Party loyalties being what they were, the government's narrow majority was very precarious and it was understandable that it should try to increase it. Also, parliamentary head-counters could not help but realize that the balance of power, in certain situations, could rest in the hands of the French group which, if nominally split in a partisan way, would surely unite on any issue concerning language or religion.

The French were uneasy with the new situation. The change had come abruptly and they were now, for the first time, divided in the legislature. If many of them had been disappointed with (or revolted by--depending on whether they believed the charges of graft and corruption) the performance of La Rivière in the former cabinet, they had not yet overcome their doubts about the Liberal party. La Rivière's Le Manitoba, the only French newspaper in the province, did its best to increase the doubt.¹²

Suspicion centred on three areas: the official use of French in the province, the existence of separate schools, and the maintenance of the French constituencies. True, the Liberals had explicitly guaranteed French rights in all three areas both before and after the St. François-Xavier by-election. But then Joseph Martin's and H. F. Francis' campaign promises had not been reported in Le Manitoba which was putting all its weight behind Burke. As for Greenway's pledges to Mgr. Taché, these were confidential and were not divulged until 1892. In the early days of the new régime, Le Manitoba kept claiming that it was only a matter of time before the French printing of official documents would cease and that the forthcoming redistribution of seats would

¹²Le Manitoba, June 14 and 21, 1888.

halve the number of French constituencies.¹³ Le Manitoba could get away with that kind of statement as long as it had a monopoly.

It was to counter the monopoly and influence of Le Manitoba that the Courrier du Nord-Ouest was founded. This first manifestation of the "new partisanship" was backed financially by Prendergast and its editor was J.-E. Cyr.¹⁴ The best statement of its position and aims can be found in its first editorial:

Il y a quatre ans à peine, nos luttes locales ne connaissaient aucune couleur politique. Nos hommes politiques s'étaient sagement abstenus d'introduire l'esprit de parti dans l'administration des affaires de la province. Malheureusement, quelques conservateurs, ne possédant aucune réputation, réussirent à faire entrer les dissensions politiques dans nos rangs dans le but de se mettre à l'abri des attaques personnelles, et nous sommes conséquemment forcés d'accepter la situation tel qu'on nous l'a imposée. Le parti conservateur a sans cesse possédé une organe française pour défendre ses intérêts tandis que le parti libéral n'a pas encore eu cet avantage ... Il y va sans dire que notre journal est publié entièrement dans l'intérêt du gouvernement Greenway-Prendergast.¹⁵

Even if this new paper appeared a little over two months before the general election, it is doubtful whether it affected the result in any significant way. It was more a symptom than a cause of the political switch from Conservative to Liberal. In fact, it would probably be more true to say that Le Manitoba, in spite of itself, was more instrumental in this shift. Even before the appearance of the Courrier

¹³Ibid., March 15 and April 19, 1888.

¹⁴Joseph-Ernest Cyr had been mayor of St. Boniface in 1885 and M.L.A. for Ste. Agathe from 1883 to 1886. Originally elected as a Norquay supporter, he became a Liberal some time in the mid-1880's, possibly as a result of Riel's hanging and Laurier's accession to power. Along with A. F. Martin, M.L.A. for Morris, he had been one of the few Franco-Manitoban politicians to be explicitly Liberal before 1888. He unsuccessfully contested the federal constituency of Provencher in 1887 and the provincial constituency of St. Boniface in 1888, and was eventually elected for Provencher when he defeated A. A. C. La Rivière in 1903.

¹⁵Le Courrier du Nord-Ouest, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 31, 1888.

du Nord-Ouest, Le Manitoba had to admit that its dire predictions were not coming true and probably would not.

After insisting that the Greenway Government would fare no better with Ottawa over the railway disallowance issue than had its predecessor, Le Manitoba grudgingly congratulated Greenway and Martin when they returned from Ottawa at the beginning of April after having "won" Manitoba's case:

Un bon nombre de citoyens se sont rendus à la gare pour les recevoir, musique en tête. La bonne nouvelle que nous apportent nos ministres justifie cette démonstration de la part du public en général.¹⁶

Later that same month, the new redistribution of seats became known and Le Manitoba's suspicions were proven groundless: the French constituencies remained intact. Always more French than Conservative, the paper again expressed approval of the government: "Nous sommes heureux de constater que le bon esprit a dominé le fanatisme et l'intrigue ..."¹⁷

The example of this supposedly anti-government paper's not being able to find anything wrong with the government was certainly a major influence in switching the allegiance of French Canadians. Not to be overlooked, however, was the "corruption issue." The Greenway government was carrying on an investigation into its predecessor's "maladministration." The charges against La Rivière, whether true or not, were loudly trumpeted especially by the Courrier du Nord-Ouest.

The election which everyone expected was called for July 11. In the province as a whole, Greenway's victory was a foregone conclu-

¹⁶Le Manitoba, April 5, 1888.

¹⁷Ibid., April 26, 1888.

sion; in the six French constituencies, it was less so, even if the trend was in the same direction. For the first time since its founding, Le Manitoba remained neutral. Its reason for doing so was far from convincing:

L'on s'étonne parfois du fait que notre journal ne prenne pas une part plus active dans la grande lutte qui se prépare contre les deux partis qui se disputent le pouvoir; mais si l'on considère que nous avons toujours tenu à notre indépendance absolue, que nous n'avons jamais hésité à blâmer ou à louer les faits et gestes de nos amis comme de nos adversaires, suivant leur mérite, l'on ne devrait pas être surpris de nous voir continuer à suivre la même ligne de conduite.¹⁸

The only logical conclusion from this was that the French Conservatives were unable to make a case for themselves.

In Morris constituency, the Liberal, A. F. Martin, was re-elected by acclamation, while in the confused La Vérendrye election, the two candidates were both claiming to be the real Liberal. Thomas Gelley in Cartier and J. E. P. Prendergast in Woodlands both had easy victories and, to a lesser extent, so did Martin Jérôme¹⁹ in Carillon (see Table 1). All of them were Government supporters. The only exception to the swing was St. Boniface where Roger Marion, running as a Conservative, narrowly beat out J.-E. Cyr, in a battle which possibly owed more to personality than party.²⁰

The four Liberal victors in Carillon, La Vérendrye, Woodlands,

¹⁸Ibid., June 14, 1888.

¹⁹Martin Jérôme was a St. Norbert-born Métis who had been active in agricultural circles. He was M.L.A. for Carillon from 1888 to 1896 and from 1899 to 1903.

²⁰Roger Marion, a Métis, was mayor of St. Boniface for three years. He represented Carillon in the Legislature from 1886 to 1888 and from 1896 to 1899, and St. Boniface from 1888 to 1892. A seemingly wealthy man, he was the owner of "Norwood Grove," which would soon become the English-speaking quarter of the city. The street dividing the English-and French-speaking sectors of the city still bears his name.

T A B L E 1

RESULTS OF THE JULY 11, 1888 GENERAL ELECTION

ST. BONIFACE		LA VERENDRYE	
R. Marion (C)	182	W. Lagimodière (L)	240
J.-E. Cyr (L)	162	L. G. Gagnon (L)	179
CARILLON		WOODLANDS	
Martin Jerome (L)	126	J. E. P. Prendergast (L)	331
Paul Chenard (C)	99	J. M. Robinson (C)	263
MORRIS		CARTIER	
A. F. Martin (L)	Acclamation	T. Gelley (L)	271
		Joseph Hamelin (C)	123

Source: Canadian Parliamentary Companion, 1889 edition.

and Cartier had all been former Conservatives and the two Liberal losers in La Vérendrye and St. Boniface had been Liberals for some time before the election. It is possible that "party men" were more mistrusted than those who were willing to change labels as circumstances dictated. The minority, aware of its vulnerability, had to have unity and this unity had to be based on language and religion. There was a mistrust of those who seemed to place the interests of party before those of race and religion. That is not to say that the French considered party politics unimportant. To the contrary, they realized that their greatest threat came from the possibility of a political party making an appeal to the prejudices of the majority. They also realized that their greatest protection came from co-operating fully with the dominant party and perhaps in holding a balance of power. In the formative years of political parties in Manitoba, the French looked upon them as tools to be used in their fight for survival. They would give their support to whichever party gave the best assurance of maintaining the educational and linguistic status quo in the province. For this attitude, they were often called traitors and accused of making "unholy alliances."²¹ The truth is that vulnerability made the minority more politically conscious and that they more fully realized the implications of the emergence of political parties.

Barely a month after the 1888 election, Le Courrier du Nord-Ouest reported that Marion, although he had defeated the government supporter at the election, had announced that he himself would support the Government in the House.²² Thus the political turnover was complete and

²¹Clague, op. cit., page 113.

²²Le Courrier du Nord-Ouest, August 7, 1888.

the French group in the House once more united behind the government of the day. The turnover was one concerning partisan allegiance only; there had been no change in the French Catholics' basic approach to government which still consisted of co-operation with the dominant party.

There have been many claims made, especially during the "School Question" debate, that the French had given all their support to Greenway in 1888 on the strength of Liberal promises to uphold their rights. This was probably true in the case of the St. François-Xavier by-election, but not in the general election. The St. François-Xavier "pledges" had not been reported in the press and those made to Mgr. Taché were confidential. Both had been made out of necessity--the Liberals could not have assumed power without French support. In retrospect, it can be seen that Joe Martin, James Smart, and other cabinet ministers looked upon the general election as a means of ridding themselves of dependence on the French. Thus, they were not going to commit themselves further, and possibly alienate some English-speaking voters, by repeating the promises. Le Courrier du Nord-Ouest, like the true partisan paper it was, did not embarrass the Greenway government by reminding voters of the method by which it had achieved power.

The "pledges," however, played an indirect role: the government in fact did nothing between the St. François-Xavier by-election and the general election to disturb the French constituencies or separate schools in spite of expectations that they might. Of considerable importance was the desire of the French to co-operate with the party in power, their confidence in its competence after the initial success with Ottawa and the influence of a politician who was not a candidate:

A. A. C. La Rivière. The fact that he was not running and the strange

attitude of his newspaper were probably taken as a tacit admission of guilt. Even after the election, Le Manitoba made no comment at all on the election of the French members. It merely mentioned that the government's victory was due to the federal government's "capitulation," the credit of which should really have gone to the "Norquay-La Rivière Administration" who had "paved the way."²³

In 1888, the stage seemed to be set for an efficient administration, free of racial friction, supervising the development of a growing province. Then the roof fell in.

²³Le Manitoba, July 12, 1888.

CHAPTER II

THE SCHOOL QUESTION ELECTIONS PART I

The Political Wilderness

If the "Manitoba School Question" was the central political fact of the decade of the nineties in Manitoba, it was even more so for the French Catholics in the province. For the English-speaking Protestants, the new law usually meant changing the name of their schools from "protestant" to "public" while altering little or nothing in content; to the French-speaking Catholics, it was a way of life suddenly, unexpectedly, and brutally attacked. To the English-speaking, the abolition of French as an official language was a saving in government expenditures and a step in shaping society to their liking; to the French, it meant being relegated to worse than second-class citizenship; it meant being treated as foreigners in the land they had discovered and colonized. If the English-speaking could forget the School Question in the 1896 federal election and the 1899 provincial election, to the French-speaking, the School Question and its aftermath remained the central issue. It would continue to influence their voting behaviour for decades.

The anti-French laws of 1890 (i.e., those abolishing the dual system of schools and establishing a tax-supported public school system, abolishing French as an official language in the province, and eliminating Catholic feast days as public holidays), stopped short the dual partisanship of the French which had started to emerge in 1888. After

the government ceased to print official documents in French, and especially after Joseph Martin's notorious Portage la Prairie speech of August 1, 1889, in which he committed the government to the abolition of all French and Catholic rights,¹ J. E. Prendergast was forced to resign from the cabinet. The Courrier du Nord-Ouest ceased publication and when the attack came in the Legislature a few months later, Prendergast assumed leadership of the Catholic opposition. The five French Catholics who had been elected as government supporters in 1888 now joined R. Marion in bitter opposition. They were unanimous and united in their approach and put up an excellent, albeit futile, fight against injustice.

Under the circumstances, one might have expected that, come election time, this group of men would have been re-elected without any trouble, probably by acclamation, especially since the 1892 and 1896 elections had been called on the School Question (In 1892, Greenway had called an election to get back into power before a possibly adverse Judicial Committee of the Privy Council decision could be handed down. In 1896, he again called a snap election, this time to try to forestall, by a show of strength, the federal government from passing a remedial bill.)² and that this was the only issue for the French. Such was not the case, however.

The attack on the French had fallen short of physical violence; it had been aimed at the subjugation of their social values, at their cultural assimilation. It had not been violent enough to obviate all causes of discord among them. Their unanimous opposition to the Schools

¹For accounts, see Morton, op. cit., page 244, and Clague, op. cit., pp. 145ff.

²Holmes, op. cit., pp. 88ff. and pp. 101ff.

Act still left some room for recrimination, personal ambition, and hawk-dove debates over what their response to the attack should be.

The important considerations of the 1892 election as far as the French were concerned were a) their unanimous opposition to the government over the one thing that mattered: schools, b) the 1892 gerrymander, and c) the fact that the official opposition Conservative Party pledged itself to uphold the Schools Act. Unanimous opposition meant that candidates were bound to conduct their campaign on the ground of being more opposed to the government than their opponent. The gerrymander meant that there were fewer French constituencies, thus forcing two incumbents to run against each other. Conservative support of the Schools Act meant that the French were left with no ally or party they could affiliate with.

The 1892 gerrymander³ determined the course of the election in Morris and was an important factor in St. Boniface. In "re-arranging" Morris, the government sought to eliminate in one swoop three of its opponents: A. F. Martin of Morris, T. Gelley of Cartier, and R. P. Roblin of Dufferin. It succeeded in two out of three of these objectives by enlarging Morris to include nearly all of what was formerly Cartier and half of Dufferin. The result was a constituency more than twice the size of either Rosenfeldt or Rhineland which bordered it.⁴ By putting half the town of Carman into Morris, the government had split Roblin's stronghold. The plot succeeded and Roblin lost by a narrow margin. By amalgamating Morris and Cartier, the government made sure

³For a full discussion of the gerrymander, see Holmes, op. cit., pp. 86ff.

⁴Ibid., page 94.

that at least one of the French Canadian incumbents would not be re-elected. Finally, by enlarging the new constituency toward the east, the government hoped to bring in enough English-speaking residents to defeat the remaining French Canadian incumbent.

The election went along straight racial-religious lines. An English-speaking Orangeman supporting the government's Schools Act ran against a French Catholic and former papal Zouave who was violently against it. A. F. Martin, the French candidate, had been the only French M.L.A. to have consistently supported Greenway and the Liberals from the start of the 1880's up to the time of the attack on separate schools--even when the latter party made anti-French pronouncements. When his religion was being attacked, however, the former Zouave did not hesitate in being one of the most vociferous of the anti-Greenway group. After having urged the electorate all throughout the 1880's to defeat him, Le Manitoba now decried the Greenway plot to eliminate him and gave him full support.⁵ In spite of the government's best efforts, there remained enough Catholics in Morris to put Martin over the top by a few votes. In the other French constituencies, the voter's choice was less simple.

The 1892 gerrymander also affected Prendergast. His constituency of Woodlands was altered to make it a predominantly Protestant one. He therefore chose to run in St. Boniface where the incumbent was Roger Marion, the only French Conservative elected in 1888. Prendergast was accused during the campaign of having chosen to run in St. Boniface out of spite against the "loyal" Marion rather than having been forced to do so by the gerrymander. A. F. Martin, at a meeting in St. Boniface

⁵Le Manitoba, April 27, 1892.

on July 4,⁶ charged that Greenway had offered not to alter Woodlands or to oppose him in the election if Prendergast would run there. There is no reason to disbelieve this charge and, in fact, it would have been logical on Greenway's part to make the overture. Such an arrangement, however, implies reciprocity, and it is doubtful whether Prendergast would have entered into such a bargain with the man who had used him once, betrayed him, and now was trying to use him again for political advantage. Furthermore, as an astute politician, Prendergast knew that in the heated atmosphere of 1892, even to appear "in cahoots" with Greenway would be political suicide. That he chose to run in St. Boniface rather than in his former constituency of La Vérendrye can be explained by the fact that he not only lived there, but was mayor of St. Boniface as well. Of course, the fact that Marion was a Conservative and the incumbent in La Vérendrye (W. Lagimodière) was a former Liberal cannot be excluded as part of the explanation.

The election in St. Boniface was the most bitterly contested among those constituencies in which the French had a real choice. Le Manitoba devoted more space in praise and defence of Marion and in invective against Prendergast than it did to the coverage of all other aspects of the election put together. It tried to make the issue one of loyalty and of degree of opposition to the Greenway government. It claimed that Marion's frankly Conservative and anti-Greenway stand at the previous election had been proven right by events while Prendergast and Jérôme (the incumbent in Carillon), driven by personal ambition, had betrayed their friends and their party (both had been Norquay supporters) on the

⁶Reported in Le Manitoba, July 6, 1892.

strength of promises which everyone should have known would not be kept. In the process, they had helped to bring on the disaster by proving themselves untrustworthy not only to their former friends, but to their new allies as well.

Le Manitoba nevertheless conceded that Prendergast had been the true Leader of the Opposition during the School Question debates and that he had carried on an excellent fight. In spite of this, Le Manitoba felt that this opposition did not extend to other fields: "Ayant son siège du côté de l'opposition, ses sympathies sont restées avec le gouvernement."⁷ At this time of crisis, only unequivocal opposition on all issues aimed at the defeat of the government could be tolerated. By presenting himself as an independent, Prendergast was compromising the opposition's efforts to supplant the government.

However, after Le Manitoba had taken such a strong stand in favour of the Conservatives and against independents, the Conservative party came out in support of the public school system--promising no changes if it should come to power. Le Manitoba's enthusiasm for the Conservatives was thereby considerably dampened and it confined itself to diatribes against the government, Prendergast, and Jérôme. (For some reason, it made no comment on the election in La Vérendrye.) The Conservative stand was a blow to the French because it left them isolated, without allies. No matter who won, they would lose the election. The best they could hope for was the election of half a dozen or so M.L.A.'s who would keep the fires burning until the inevitable day when their rights would be restored. That this would happen, they had little doubt. The text and intent of the Manitoba Act were unmistakable, they believed,

⁷Ibid., May 25, 1892.

and either the courts or the federal government could not do otherwise but redress the injustice. This confidence was expressed in Le Manitoba's post mortem on the election: "Ce résultat serait des plus alarmants, si nous n'étions protégés par une constitution qu'il faudra respecter de toute nécessité tôt ou tard."⁸

The results in St. Boniface were anti-climactic. A recount produced a 312-312 tie. The Returning Officer, J.-E. Cyr, was Marion's opponent of 1888 and Prendergast's former editor on Le Courrier du Nord-Ouest. His casting vote produced no surprises. Prendergast won. Le Manitoba's other villain, Martin Jérôme, also won his election in Carillon. The La Vérendrye results are not very enlightening, at least not according to the information available. Both the incumbent (a Liberal in 1888) and his opponent claimed to be independent candidates. Each won an overwhelming victory in his own parish,⁹ suggesting that the electorate, faced with candidates of similar political stands, simply voted for their native sons.

After the election, Le Manitoba made no comment on the results in the French constituencies. It lamented instead the acceptance by the majority of Manitobans of the assimilationist slogan: "One people, one language, one school system." The two candidates it most favoured, Marion and Bernier, had both been defeated. But the margins were so narrow--one and twenty-six votes respectively--that this could hardly be called a victory of the "moderates" over the "die-hards." If anything, the two elections of St. Boniface and Carillon reflected the bewilderment and disorientation of the French Catholics at being sud-

⁸Ibid., July 27, 1892.

⁹Ibid.

denly excluded to a political wilderness. On the school question itself, they were unanimous. But they could not decide whether opposition to the government on the school question implied total opposition to all government measures in the hope that it might be defeated. And if the Liberals were defeated, would the Conservatives be any better? These questions were not answered in 1892 and were repeated in 1896.

The 1896 election, in many respects, was a re-run of the previous one. The province-wide issue was the same, and the question of being "more or less against the government" lingered in the French constituencies, especially in Carillon where R. Marion, having been beaten by Prendergast in 1892, now returned to his former constituency as a "loyalist" to confront the "collaborationist," Martin Jérôme. Elsewhere, the candidates were also the same. T. Paré and T. Lagimodière repeated their parish-pump fight of 1892 in La Vérendrye with identical results. A. F. Martin was opposed by the same Orangeman in Morris; Prendergast was now opposed by Marion's former campaign manager, J.-B. Lauzon.¹⁰

But there were important differences as well. The campaign was conducted at a much lower key, partly because the federal Remedial Bill was monopolizing Le Manitoba's political columns, and because people were weary of the issue--the position of the French Catholics in the province had not changed in four years--partly because the French were less disoriented than in 1892, and furthermore, the over-all results were a foregone conclusion. The French no longer hoped that Greenway

¹⁰Jean-Baptiste Lauzon was at the time a St. Boniface alderman (1885-1898). A butcher by profession, he was a Conservative candidate in every provincial election from 1896 to 1915. He was M.L.A. for St. Boniface in 1897-99 and for La Vérendrye in 1907-10 and 1914-15. He was also, for a time, president of the Société St. Jean-Baptiste.

could be defeated. Le Manitoba expressed partisanship only once:

Les meilleures nouvelles nous arrivent du comté de Carillon, M. Roger Marion fait vaillamment la lutte et il va renvoyer dans la vie privée d'où il n'aurait jamais dû sortir, M. Martin Jérôme, ce soudoyé de l'administration Greenway.¹¹

Surprisingly, it even supported Prendergast and suggested that he should have been returned by acclamation:

MM. Prendergast et Lauzon viennent d'être mis en nomination. Franchement, pour ce qui est de nous, nous aurions de beaucoup préféré une entente à l'aimable, vu les circonstances particulières où nous nous trouvons. Faire acte de bonne volonté n'est pas s'abaisser.¹²

Yet Prendergast had not changed his position vis-à-vis the government in the interval. His stand at a St. Boniface public meeting, according to the Conservative Daily Nor' Wester, was as follows:

Mr. Prendergast appealed for support to the electors on the ground of past services rendered to them. He laid stress on the fact that even though a Liberal he was against the Greenway government on the school question. He characterized the action of the Greenway government as cruel and said that no true French Canadian should support it. He appealed to his hearers to be liberal in their feelings and views towards those differing with them in religion.¹³

The Liberal Free Press reported that "he had on five or six occasions taken an independent stand and voted against the government."¹⁴

Both papers classed Prendergast as an "Independent" while they termed Lagimodière and Jérôme, who were also calling themselves "Independent Liberals," as plain Liberals. These labels should not, however, be taken at their face value. It may be true that there was a greater polarization between candidates in 1896 than in 1892 because Tupper's

¹¹Le Manitoba, January 8, 1896. ¹²Ibid.

¹³Daily Nor' Wester, January 9, 1896.

¹⁴Manitoba Free Press, January 9, 1896.

Conservatives had come out squarely in favour of a remedial bill. Thus, there was less stigma in presenting oneself as Conservative, which is what Lauzon, Paré, and Marion did. As a result, there was a tendency to brand as "Liberals" the opponents of "Conservatives," especially when they were admirers of Wilfrid Laurier. But no French Canadian would come out in outright support of Greenway--even those who supported government measures in the House. Le Manitoba, still bitterly opposed to Greenway, could have been counted upon to blast any candidate who put in a good word for him. That it was only mildly partisan in Carillon and neutral (if not pro-Prendergast in St. Boniface) in the other contests is the best indication that the candidates claiming to be "independent" actually were.

The bitterness of 1892 was gone, but the French Catholics of Manitoba were still in the political wilderness and were still not sure how to respond. Should they elect independent candidates who might support the government on some issues or should they send M.L.A.'s who would identify with the official opposition? In the final analysis, they seemed to have sent the individual who would best "defend the cause." In La Vérendrye, the result was the same as in 1892; in St. Boniface, Prendergast was re-elected with a sizeable majority while in Carillon, R. Marion, Conservative, got back into the House by defeating the incumbent, M. Jérôme, the Independent Liberal.

The mood of the French, that of resignation at being politically friendless, of resignation at the certain re-election of Greenway, can be clearly seen in Le Manitoba's comments after the election:

Les élections de la 9^{ème} législature tenues hier, comme tout le monde s'y attendait, ont été favorables au gouvernement.

C'est le fanatisme qui triomphe encore une fois . ¹⁵

Dans les divisions françaises de Saint-Boniface, La Vérendrye, et Carillon, l'élection ne présentait pas le même caractère [que dans le reste de la province]. Il s'agissait de choisir le candidat le plus en état de combattre avec énergie et talent pour la revendication de nos droits imprescriptibles, et de flageller sans merci, les despotes au petit pied qui nous gouvernent en ce moment. Il s'agissait de faire taire tout ce qui était de nature à affaiblir notre cause et de nous rallier autour de ceux qui par leurs connaissances et leur expérience parlementaire pouvaient le mieux servir nos intérêts. La grave question de nos écoles dominait toute autre considération. D'un commun accord les électeurs, conservateurs comme libéraux, ont cru qu'il ne fallait pas introduire ces divisions dans nos luttes provinciales, et en cela notre population a continué à suivre les traditions du passé. Notre peuple est trop faible pour se payer le luxe de luttes fratricides, et à quoi bon d'ailleurs! Nous sommes tout unanimes dans une opposition au gouvernement.

L'hon. M. Prendergast, dans le cours de sa campagne électorale, déclarait qu'il ne faudrait pas avoir de coeur pour approuver le gouvernement Greenway, et nous savons également que M. Paré, pour La Vérendrye et M. Marion, député pour Carillon, sont dans les mêmes sentiments.¹⁶

In 1892, the French Catholic minority was not unlike a trapped animal: helpless, but not fully realizing it, showing defiance to its tormentor as if it could still win victory over him. In 1896, it knew it was trapped and did not care much for an election which held no hope of opening a door. It was looking elsewhere for relief.

Relief came, but not the kind of relief desired; relief came, but as a mixed blessing, dividing the minority.

¹⁵Le Manitoba, January 16, 1896.

¹⁶Ibid., January 22, 1896.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL QUESTION ELECTIONS PART II

The Laurier-Greenway Compromise

The Manitoba School Question had opened up political divisions across the country but had not done so among those most affected by it: the French Catholics of Manitoba. Some division over which political tactics to use had arisen in 1892 but had subsided in 1896. There was complete unity of opposition regarding the Manitoba Schools Act as it originally stood. Within the year following the 1896 provincial election, however, two events occurred which, while virtually eliminating the School Question as a political issue in the rest of the country, would intensify it for the Franco-Manitobans and would create the first serious divisions among them. These events were the defeat of the Tupper government in Ottawa and the subsequent "Laurier-Greenway compromise."

The compromise¹ immediately split the French Catholics of Manitoba into two irreconcilable camps. On the one hand were those to whom half a loaf was better than nothing. They were the small "l" liberals

¹The main operative clauses of the compromise stipulated that in each town school of forty Catholic pupils and in each village school of twenty-five Catholic pupils, there could be one duly-qualified Catholic teacher. Religious instruction could be given by a priest during the last half-hour of each school day. With regard to language, "Where ten of the pupils in any school speak the French language (or any language other than English) as their native language," the clause provided, "the teaching of such pupils shall be conducted in French (or such other language) and English upon the bilingual system."

who awaited only a "solution" to the School Question before openly supporting the Winnipeg and Ottawa governments, with all the attendant patronage benefits that that entailed. They were those who considered that any breach in the Greenway government's uncompromising attitude, once made, could be progressively widened into an acceptable solution. Foremost among these was James Prendergast, who had been French Manitoba's most prominent politician for a decade.

On the other hand, there were those who viewed the compromise as a betrayal, a sellout, a sinister plot to deny the French Catholics their "rights" which were, according to them, complete restoration of the dual system of education with the Catholic section under the full control of the Church. Any "compromise," in their view, would seriously jeopardize their chances of achieving the ultimate goal. People across the country would be lured into thinking the matter was settled. Many French Catholics in Manitoba would be satiated with their half-loaf and would cease fighting for "the cause." Therefore, half a loaf was worse than nothing because it would make the more important second half unobtainable. Such was the reasoning of Archbishop Langevin of St. Boniface, of his clergy, of Le Manitoba and other "clerical-conservative" minded French Catholics. Langevin was also incensed by the fact that he was not consulted about the terms of the compromise--he saw it as a bargain between politicians, behind the backs and against the interests of those most vitally concerned.² His reaction, apart from condemning the "treachery" to anyone who would listen, was to forbid any of his flock from co-operating with the government in implementing the compromise

²Morice, op. cit., page 142.

and, since all legal and political avenues for redress had been exhausted, to launch a system of private schools.

In face of these contrary reactions, the position of the mass of French Catholics was hard to estimate. The clergy insisted that those who accepted the compromise were only a handful of political opportunists and that most of the people were still behind them, as they had been during the previous six years. An opportunity to test that contention at the polls was provided, by no coincidence, almost immediately. Prendergast resigned his seat and accepted an appointment to the bench thus opening the way for a by-election in St. Boniface. Le Manitoba claimed that his resignation and subsequent appointment to the bench had been contrived to test the popularity of the compromise.³ This is probably true since the resignation was sudden and unexpected, and the by-election was immediately called for February 20, 1897, less than three weeks away.

There is no doubt that the compromise was the only issue in the by-election. The Conservative candidate, J.-B. Lauzon, did not try to hide the fact that he was the "Bishop's candidate." Being the "Bishop's candidate" must have been a tantalizing prospect because Lauzon had to beat out five other candidates at the Conservative nominating convention. His stand was simply that those who accepted the compromise were traitors to their race and religion, and that if elected he would do everything in his power to obstruct its implementation. Lauzon's opponent, S. A. D. Bertrand, was a Laurier Liberal who accepted the compromise and who ran openly as a Greenway supporter.

³Le Manitoba, February 24, 1897.

Had the election remained a contest between a candidate opposed to the compromise and one in favor of it, the results would probably have reflected popular opinion on the issue. What altered the nature of the campaign was Mgr. Langevin's bold and timely intervention. On the Sunday before voting day (which was to take place the following Saturday), he made a political rostrum out of the Basilica's pulpit, effectively transforming his opinion into the Will of God and not-too-subtly implying that whoever voted for Mr. Bertrand was voting against God, the Church, and the Bishop. He expounded his thesis that education was the Church's exclusive responsibility and that the compromise ignored the Church; he argued that the half hour of religious instruction permitted by the compromise was a plot to dechristianize children by divorcing God from other subjects in the curriculum; he sought to prove that the compromise changed absolutely nothing from the law of 1890; quoting the encyclicals, he established his God-given right to tell the people how to vote when the point at issue was "exclusively religious." His conclusion, repeated more than once, was:

Vous ne pouvez voter en conscience pour un partisan du soi-disant règlement ou pour un candidat qui propose de l'essayer ou qui appuie des chefs de parti se déclarant en faveur du dit règlement.⁴

There was no way out: on all three counts, that statement was clearly aimed at Bertrand. The words "en conscience," as used by the Archbishop, meant that a Liberal vote was sinful and punishable by hellfire. And on questions of sin and hellfire, the Archbishop was the acknowledged expert.

⁴Langevin's "sermon" was reproduced in full the following day in Le Manitoba, February 15, 1897.

The Church's consecration of J.-B. Lauzon's candidacy now became the most important factor rather than the Laurier-Greenway compromise itself. There was little, if any, public protest over Langevin's intervention: even Bertrand did not protest. Instead, he circulated among the voters a statement in which he claimed that he too was in agreement with Mgr. Langevin while at the same time letting his pro-government and pro-compromise stand be known. The key passage of this document is worth quoting in full:

Monseigneur nous donne cette direction de ne pas voter pour un candidat:

- 1° Qui accepte le règlement;
- 2° Qui veut mettre à l'essai le dit règlement;
- 3° Qui reconnaît comme ses chefs des hommes approuvant le règlement.

Je déclare:

1° Que je n'ai jamais accepté le règlement comme tel. Il ne réintègre pas dans notre position antérieure. Il ne fait pas sortir la question de l'arène politique. Mes efforts en chambre tendraient à améliorer la loi dans le sens catholique et je proposerai tous les amendements possibles au règlement dans ce sens.

2° J'ai assurément exprimé l'opinion qu'il nous serait avantageux de mettre le règlement à l'essai. Il nous est maintenant défendu de faire ou conseiller cet essai. J'accepte cette direction disciplinaire et m'y conforme.

3° Je blâme la passation de l'acte des écoles de 1890 et me ferai un devoir d'exprimer ce blâme en chambre.

Ma première et ma deuxième déclaration s'appliquent à ce point.⁵

Not wanting to further antagonize the hierarchy, Bertrand limited his campaign to circulating his letter and avoiding public meetings. The atmosphere of the campaign was extremely heated. A Quebec Liberal M.P. who had come to speak in favor of Bertrand was prevented from doing so by a crowd in St. Norbert.⁶ Bertrand's own utterances, by Le Mani-

⁵Published in Le Manitoba, March 3, 1897.

⁶Ibid., February 15, 1897.

toba's count, amounted to all of fifteen minutes. In replying to accusations that there was an organized attempt to prevent him from speaking,

Le Manitoba said:

Les feuilles libérales disent que M. Bertrand n'a pas pu parler aux assemblées publiques, ce qui est absolument faux. M. Bertrand a parlé pendant cinq minutes à St. Norbert, personne ne l'en a empêché. Il n'a ensuite assisté à aucune autre assemblée.⁷

The outcome of the election was not unexpected: Lauzon obtained the largest proportion of the popular vote in the constituency's history (388 to 208). If we assume that the 10 to 15% of the voters who were English Protestant voted for Bertrand, Lauzon's victory among the French Catholics is even greater.⁸ But, had the French Catholics decisively repudiated the Laurier-Greenway Compromise, or did their vote reflect the Archbishop's pressure? The extent of Lauzon's victory indicates a combination of the two. There can be no doubt that a good many French Catholics shared Archbishop Langevin's frustration. After six years of struggle, all the minority managed to obtain was a "compromise" which, at its best, granted only a small part of what they felt they were entitled to, and even this "compromise" did not extend to all Catholics. Furthermore, at the beginning of 1897, the compromise was untried and its opponents claimed that it would be meaningless in its application.

On the other hand, the deeply religious French Canadians could not easily dismiss their Archbishop's contention that they could not "en conscience" vote Liberal.⁹ Le Manitoba best expressed this relig-

⁷Ibid., February 24, 1897.

⁸Le Manitoba (March 10, 1897) claims there were 120 English names on the voters' list which totalled 866.

⁹It was even suggested by some Quebec Liberal papers that many

ious approach to the election. After concluding that only one hundred of Bertrand's votes were "catholic," it lamented that "cent votes catholiques contre nous, contre les enseignements si clairs et si saints de l'Eglise, c'est encore trop."¹⁰

More light is thrown on the results of the St. Boniface by-election of 1897 by comparing it with those of the general election three years later. Then, as we shall see, the issue was the same, but the Archbishop's formal neutrality had been secured and the compromise had been tried out in practice.

The December 7, 1899 general election is the most striking in the history of French Canadian voting in Manitoba. In the three French constituencies, St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Carillon, all the candidates were the same as in the previous election (for St. Boniface, this meant the by-election). Ostensibly, the issue was also the same. Yet, the three losing candidates in the previous elections, all of them Liberal or Independent Liberal, turned out to be the solid winners in 1899. Martin Jérôme got his seat back from Roger Marion who had taken it away from him in 1896; W. Lagimodière got his seat back from Théophile Paré who had taken it away from him in 1892, and S. A. D. Bertrand, who had been so soundly drubbed by J.-B. Lauzon in 1897, was now the winner! Furthermore, while the province as a whole was defeating the Greenway government and voting the Conservative party of Hugh John Macdonald into

French Canadians, who supported the compromise but did not want to disobey the Archbishop, thus abstained from voting. This is possible, but could not have occurred to any great extent. The turnout was 69% in 1897 while it had been 73% the year before--a negligible difference easily attributable to a snowstorm on voting day. (Le Manitoba, March 10, 1897) Furthermore, at the general election three years later, when the Archbishop was formally neutral, the turnout was even lower: 67%.

¹⁰Le Manitoba, February 24, 1897.

office, the only constituencies in the province to switch their allegiance from Conservative to Liberal were St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Carillon!

Two weeks before the election, J.-B. Lauzon had written an open letter to his constituents:

Je viens de nouveau solliciter vos suffrages avec le même programme que celui que je vous ai soumis lors de ma dernière élection, et ayant le même adversaire à combattre. C'est vous dire que la lutte se fait absolument sur le même terrain et dans les mêmes conditions, puisque les événements n'ont rien apporté pour justifier un changement de l'opinion presque unanime que vous avez exprimée la dernière fois.¹¹

This statement was a monumental piece of wishful thinking which was characteristic of the French Conservatives' campaign. They refused to recognize one crucial change which had occurred since the previous election and which put the present election in an entirely different light. This event, which was to trigger many others, was the disclosure, in January 1898, of the text of the Papal Encyclical, Affari Vos, devoted exclusively to the School Question and the Laurier-Greenway compromise.

This encyclical was the result of representations and counter-representations by both the ultramontane bishops and the Laurier government to the Vatican and of the mission of enquiry in 1897 of Cardinal Merry del Val, the papal envoy. It contained a full exposition of the Catholic Church's views on education and, applied specifically to Manitoba, it condemned the school laws of 1890, congratulated the Catholic bishops for their valiant fight and termed the compromise only a "partial satisfaction." This passage, which Le Manitoba reprinted time and time again and which so delighted small and large "C" conservatives, merits a full quote:

¹¹Published in Le Manitoba, November 24, 1899.

Nous ne pouvons toutefois dissimuler la vérité; la loi que l'on a faite, dans le but de réparation, est défectueuse, imparfaite, insuffisante. C'est beaucoup plus que les catholiques demandent et qu'ils ont, personne n'en doute, le droit de demander ... pour tout dire en un mot. Il n'a pas encore été suffisamment pourvu aux droits des catholiques et à l'éducation de nos enfants au Manitoba.¹²

But, unfortunately for Langevin and the Conservatives, the encyclical did not stop there. A few paragraphs later, there was a passage which was reprinted just as often--but this time by the Liberals:

En attendant et jusqu'à ce qu'il soit donné de faire triompher toutes leurs revendications, qu'ils (les catholiques) ne refusent point de satisfactions partielles. C'est pourquoi, partout où la loi, où le fait, où les bonnes dispositions des personnes, leur offrent quelques moyens d'atténuer le mal, et d'en éloigner davantage les dangers, il convient tout à fait et il est utile qu'ils usent et qu'ils en tirent le meilleur parti possible.¹³

The message was clear: it was a refutation by the Pope, in the most diplomatic way possible, of Langevin's no-compromise stand. It gently, but effectively, put a stop to his obstruction and gave some respectability to those who favored the compromise. In the words of a Laurier biographer: "The poison was drawn, the climate altered; the Rouge could walk before his bishop again, freed of the horns and hooves. . . . The number of mortal sins was reduced by one."¹⁴

One of the first results of the encyclical in Manitoba was that Rouges now started coming out into the open. A Liberal newspaper (L'Echo de Manitoba) was founded, the first French Liberal newspaper since the demise of the Courrier du Nord-Ouest at the start of the School Question in 1889. An Association Libérale Française was also founded to

¹²Reprinted in L'Echo de Manitoba, February 24, 1898.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Joseph Schull, Laurier, the First Canadian (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965), page 367.

give the party an organizational base in the French constituencies. It is noteworthy that this organization was separate from, if affiliated with, the provincial associations. This was in contrast to the French Conservatives whose breach with the provincial organization had not been as wide nor had lasted as long and whose constituency organizations were still part of the provincial body.

The full text of the encyclical was dutifully read from all Catholic pulpits in the province with the instruction from Mgr. Langevin that it be read without any comment since, according to him, it "spoke for itself". This was a good tactic because the part advocating compromise was so short and mild in language that it could be easily lost amidst the strongly-worded and numerous pages reiterating the Church's stand and condemning previous government actions. To the unwary, the encyclical might seem a vindication of Mgr. Langevin. Le Manitoba explicitly gave it that interpretation. To make sure that no one would be "misled," however, the new Echo de Manitoba gave a more accurate, if still unbalanced, "between-the-lines" interpretation.

The contradictory interpretations of the encyclical by the two French weeklies started a war of words between them which was to last for months and which was still going on when the 1899 election was called. Le Manitoba insisted that the encyclical "spoke for itself" when it explicitly condemned the Schools Act, praised the fight of the bishops, called the compromise "defective, unsuitable, insufficient," and asked Catholics to continue the fight for their rights. That it also called upon Catholics to co-operate in the implementation of the compromise while trying to widen its scope was merely an "extension" of the Archbishop's past policy. Le Manitoba did not explain what it meant

by "extension." The point that seems to have been lost by Le Manitoba and other Conservatives was that, given the world-wide struggle for educational "rights," given the Church's teaching on the subject, given the need to present a common front and not to disavow his bishops, the Pope could not do otherwise but to make these strong points. Once this is taken into account, the few conciliatory lines in the encyclical become, in effect, the key to the entire text. Thus, L'Echo de Manitoba, which in its polemics acted as if these few lines were the only ones in the encyclical, was much closer to a true interpretation. If the debate over Affari Vos is studied in detail here, it is because it was probably one of the most important determinants of the 1899 election results.

Just as important as polemics, however, were actions. If Mgr. Langevin promised not to cease fighting for "full educational rights for Catholic children," he nevertheless quietly and unobtrusively complied with the conciliatory aspects of the encyclical. Most of the French Catholic rural schools were integrated into the public school system. His separate schools were reduced from over 80 to less than a dozen--although that included some of the biggest urban ones.¹⁵ If he had not appointed any Catholic representative on the Education Advisory Board as he had been invited to do, he put up no objection when S. A. D. Bertrand accepted the post. More important, if his political sympathies were still known, the encyclical deprived him of an excuse for political

¹⁵In January 1898, Langevin's private schools numbered 82 (Morice, op. cit., page 147). The Report of the Department of Education for the Province of Manitoba for the year 1900 gives the number of schools under the jurisdiction of Roger Goulet, inspector of "French-English schools," as 84 (page 489). These were, in large measure, the same schools which had been brought into the public school system. In 1901, there were only five private Catholic schools in Winnipeg (Canadian Annual Review, 1902, page 466).

intervention--his formal neutrality was thus secured for the 1899 election.

These, then, were the significant changes that had occurred between the 1896-97 elections and December 1899: the Pope had issued Affari Vos which put a stop to Archbishop Langevin's obstruction on the compromise; the compromise itself was tried and found to be not as objectionable as originally expected; both political parties now had formal organizations; a new and aggressive French newspaper had appeared to give a Liberal perspective on political events. It is understandable that J.-B. Lauzon and other Conservatives would want to deny that these changes had taken place: all were working against the Conservatives, especially Lauzon, whose main prop had been taken away from him.¹⁶ If the Conservatives could manage to convince the electorate that nothing had changed, then presumably the election results would not change either and the three incumbent Conservatives would be returned.

The Conservative banner was far from reserved for self-interested politicians. School Question diehards and clerical-minded people who could not bear to see doubt cast on the absolute wisdom of the Archbishop--as some of the Liberals, sometimes through the columns of L'Echo de Manitoba, seemed to be doing--came flocking to the party. There is some irony in this because the Conservative party of Hugh John Macdonald in 1899 was no better disposed toward the French Canadians than it had been previously. Macdonald had even proposed that the franchise law be

¹⁶An interesting footnote to Langevin's support of Lauzon is the latter's explanation in the Legislature as to why the Archbishop should not be accused of dabbling in politics even if he got him (Lauzon) elected. "Vous accusez l'archevêque de se mêler de politique ...", he told the government reproachfully, "Il ne veut que les droits des catholiques. N'est-ce pas lui qui a fait élire M. Prendergast contre moi-même l'année passée?"--Quoted in Le Manitoba, March 17, 1897.

altered to permit only citizens who could speak and write English to vote.¹⁷ In spite of the fact that he "clarified" this declaration later by saying that it was meant to apply only to Slavic immigrants, it was not very reassuring to the French Canadians. L'Echo made sure that his original declaration did not pass unnoticed. There were also many signs of reconciliation between the Conservatives and McCarthy-ite Orangemen.¹⁸ The fanatically anti-Catholic and anti-French Morning Telegram supported the Conservatives partly on the ground that

Every intelligent man is aware that the so-called "settlement" Mr. Greenway accepted at the dictation of Mr. Tarte is far more subversive of the National School system than anything the Tupper Government ever proposed.¹⁹

Orangemen claimed the compromise went too far while extreme Catholics claimed it did not go far enough. The former thought they could repeal it, while the latter thought they could extend it. Thus rival extremists came together within the Conservative Party.

Le Manitoba insisted that the election was again a referendum on the French Catholic's acceptance of the compromise:

C'est la question du règlement qui est posée devant l'électorat. Si nous votons pour le maintien du gouvernement Greenway, nous aurons voté pour le maintien de ce règlement défectueux. Que nous le voulions ou que nous ne voulions pas, c'est l'interprétation qui sera donné à notre verdict.²⁰

This verdict, it explained, should be expressed by a vote for H. J. Macdonald's Conservatives:

Si nous étions assez nombreux dans la province, pour commander, on pourrait, nous le comprenons, nous conseiller une

¹⁷The Morning Telegram, August 11, 1899.

¹⁸Morton, op. cit., page 279.

¹⁹The Morning Telegram, November 17, 1899.

²⁰Le Manitoba, October 25, 1899.

organisation propre, régulière, absolument détachée de toute alliance.

Mais telle n'est pas notre situation.

Pour arriver à un résultat, il nous faut compter avec les autres et sur les autres.

Or M. Macdonald et son groupe sont les seules forces capables, en ce moment, de renverser Greenway.

Cet homme (Greenway) et son parti méritent un châtimeut ...

Donc, en l'absence de toute force intrinsèque pouvant nous permettre d'infliger ce châtimeut à notre ennemi, la ressource qui nous reste, c'est nous faire une arme des forces extérieures à notre portée.

C'est là notre tactique. Ces forces extérieures, c'est M. Macdonald, c'est son groupe.

On ne saurait justement nous reprocher d'en user.

M. Macdonald n'est pas pour nous un maître; c'est un allié, marchant avec nous contre un ennemi commun.

Le group de M. Macdonald n'est pas une organisation dans laquelle nous disparaissions; c'est une armée faisant notre oeuvre, l'oeuvre que nous ne pourrions pas faire nous-mêmes à cause de notre faiblesse numérique.

Il n'y a que deux hommes en face; un troisième est impossible. Il faut dire la même chose des groupes politiques.

De là, selon nous, la nécessité pour les catholiques de s'allier à l'un ou à l'autre.

Supposant que M. Macdonald ne serait pas parfaitement d'accord avec nous sur certains points, il n'y aurait dans les circonstances rien de répréhensible ni d'extraordinaire dans notre alliance avec lui.

Au sortir des élections, il arrivera peut-être que la majorité du vainqueur sera si faible qu'il aura besoin de nous. Nous pourrions alors parler efficacement.²¹

In case the point was missed, it repeated, on the same page:

Ce n'est pas le triomphe de M. Macdonald qu'est notre but, c'est la dégringolade de M. Greenway, comme punition de ses injustices à notre égard.²²

To the Liberals and L'Echo²³ this was a bad case of arrested development. Their answer to the Conservatives, if equally partisan, was much more to the point:

²¹Ibid., September 6, 1899.

²²Ibid.

²³The identification of L'Echo's views with those of the French Liberals and of Le Manitoba's with those of the French Conservatives may safely be made. In 1899, the editor of L'Echo was S. A. D. Bertrand, Liberal candidate in St. Boniface, and the editor of Le Manitoba was Joseph Bernier, the "official" Conservative in St. Boniface for most of the campaign (see below page 51).

Il n'est pas question de protester contre l'injustice com-
mise à notre égard; deux fois déjà, en 1892 et en 1896, la
minorité a protesté énergiquement et clairement contre la vio-
lation de ses droits.

.....
Il ne peut donc subsister aucun doute à ce sujet. La mino-
rité catholique entend rentrer dans ses droits et luttera jus-
qu'au bout pour le triomphe de ces mêmes droits.

Aujourd'hui, tout en maintenant fermement ses déclarations
précédentes, tout en conservant intacts les principes affermis
par les votes de 1892, 1896, la minorité catholique se trouve
en présence d'une situation nouvelle.

Ses justes réclamations ont été entendues; des concessions
lui ont été accordées, des concessions partielles, il est vrai,
mais néanmoins des concessions "substantielles" qui lui lais-
sent la possibilité de donner à ses enfants une éducation abso-
lument nécessaire.

La question qui se pose maintenant aux électeurs est donc
celle-ci:

Faut-il appuyer le gouvernement auquel nous sommes redeva-
bles de ces concessions; le maintenir au pouvoir pour lui per-
mettre de réaliser jusqu'au bout ses promesses.

Ou bien faut-il de gaieté de coeur, jeter par dessus bord
tout dont nous jouissons, et nous lancer à nouveau dans l'aven-
ture?

.....
Voter avec le parti libéral c'est la certitude de conserver
les concessions actuelles et l'espoir d'en obtenir de nouvelles.

Voter avec le parti conservateur c'est se jeter à l'eau:
sans savoir si nous pourrons jamais nous sauver.

Quel est l'électeur intelligent qui pourra hésiter un seul
instant?²⁴

This argument rested on the assumption that the Greenway Lib-
erals would be returned to power. Evidently, even the Conservatives
shared this assumption. Far from predicting success for the Conserva-
tives, Le Manitoba merely insisted on the need to "punish" Greenway by
denying him French votes. Impressed and chastened by the results in
1892 and 1896, the French seemed to believe that the Liberal administra-
tion was unbeatable. This belief helps explain the seemingly irrational
results of December 7, 1899.

Religious considerations remained present of course for, although

²⁴L'Echo de Manitoba, November 23, 1899.

the formal neutrality of the Archbishop had been secured, there was no doubt as to where he stood. The Northwest Review, the official diocesan weekly, congratulated the Conservatives on the settlement of some internal differences thus lessening the chances that the "less desirable" of the candidates (Bertrand) would be elected.²⁵ Le Manitoba was more blunt:

Nous affirmons encore carrément que l'attitude de M. Bertrand sur la question scolaire, pas plus que sa candidature d'aujourd'hui ou d'il y a trois ans, n'ont l'appui des autorités ecclésiastiques.²⁶

It was also known that L'Echo, of which Bertrand was editor, had been "officially banned" from the Archbishop's palace, ostensibly because the paper had indirectly criticized Mgr. Langevin for not naming anyone to the Education Advisory Board.²⁷

There can be no doubt that intensity of feeling ran very high. In St. Boniface, one of the candidates even sacrificed his own ambition for "the cause." This man was Joseph Bernier, son of Senator T. A. Bernier and editor of Le Manitoba²⁸ who had been the overwhelming favorite at the Conservative nominating convention. The Conservatives had been dissatisfied with their sitting member "elected" by the Archbishop in 1897 and replaced him as their candidate in favour of Bernier by a vote of 33 to 5.²⁹ A few weeks before the election (the nominating convention had been held six months before), J.-B. Lauzon decided to run

²⁵Northwest Review, November 28, 1899.

²⁶Le Manitoba, November 29, 1899.

²⁷L'Echo de Manitoba, February 10, 1899.

²⁸He had succeeded A. A. C. La Rivière in 1897.

²⁹Le Manitoba, July 12, 1899.

again in spite of this setback, no doubt remembering his 1897 success.

The Conservative's cause was thereby jeopardized since their vote would be split. To avoid this, Bernier withdrew. His open letter of resignation not only shows how Conservatives looked upon the contest, but also how deeply they felt about it:

Nos deux candidatures--celle de M. Lauzon et la mienne--pourraient faire triompher celle du candidat de M. Greenway.

Ce triomphe, dans les circonstances, serait le triomphe de M. Greenway sur tout ce qui représente ici la cause de l'ordre, de la constitution, de la justice. L'effet de ce triomphe irait loin, dans toutes les autres provinces de la confédération et même jusque par delà l'océan, proclamer que les catholiques du comté de St. Boniface--du comté du centre duquel est établi le siège archiépiscopal--sont disposés à s'incliner devant la politique de M. Greenway à leur égard.

Encore une fois, je ne puis prendre cette responsabilité, et je laisse le champ libre à l'ancien député.³⁰

But, it was all to no avail. Bertrand won in St. Boniface anyway,³¹ as did Lagimodière in La Vérendrye³² and Jérôme in Carillon. In spite of the Archbishop's known sympathies, in spite of the contrary trend across the province, and in spite of Greenway's record, the Liberals captured all three French ridings. The Conservatives were stunned by their defeat. Le Manitoba termed the result an unspeakable humiliation for French Canadians:

Pendant que le reste de la province se levait pour infliger une défaite significative à M. Greenway, les trois circonscriptions électorales, plus spécialement reconnues comme des régions françaises et catholiques, ont élu des candidats de M. Greenway, nous plaçant ainsi, avouons-le, dans un état d'humiliation et de faiblesse indicibles vis-à-vis de la majorité.

Dans quelques années, alors qu'il sera possible d'écrire

³⁰Published in Le Manitoba, November 29, 1899.

³¹For his own good, perhaps he should not have. A few hours after his victory became known, his house burned down, although arson was never proven.

³²T. Paré, the defeated candidate who had been M.L.A. for eight years, thereupon entered the priesthood.

sans passion et sans égarement l'histoire de ces luttes, ce résultat électoral paraîtra invraisemblable, tant il est contre nature. On se demandera dans quel désarroi était donc tombée l'opinion publique et par quelles causes elle y avait été amenée.³³

Le Manitoba's contention that a French Liberal vote would be interpreted as ingratitude and as an expression of satisfaction with the status quo was corroborated by a letter to the Morning Telegram by a disgruntled Tory. After claiming that the Conservative Party of Manitoba had been denied power in 1896 because of its sympathy for the French, the correspondent continued:

The French in this province have treated the Conservative Party in this election like the French of Quebec treated the Conservative Party at the last federal election. It is an illustration of French gratitude.

.....
 In some respects, this action of the French is satisfactory. It shows that we are not to have any further trouble over the School Question. When the three French constituencies support Mr. Greenway, it shows that they are perfectly satisfied with the settlement of the School Question affected by Messrs. Greenway and Laurier.³⁴

L'Echo de Manitoba assessed the results more accurately:

La minorité catholique a voulu prouver qu'elle mettait le souci de la cause des écoles devant tout autre chose, elle a sans doute possible, fait connaître son "intention et sa ferme volonté de soutenir loyalement et fermement le parti quel qu'il soit qui sera disposé à lui accorder justice".

Le gouvernement Greenway s'est montré en ces dernières années favorable, aux justes réclamations de la minorité; il lui a accordé des concessions, qui pour être insuffisantes, n'en témoignent pas moins de sa bonne volonté à notre égard, et la minorité catholique française ... a oublié pour un instant ses justes motifs de ressentiment; elle a compris qu'il importait avant tout de prouver sa bonne volonté et son impartialité et elle a voté pour les candidats libéraux, pour les candidats du gouvernement qui lui avait accordé un commencement de justice.

.....

³³Le Manitoba, December 13, 1899.

³⁴The Morning Telegram, December 11, 1899.

La minorité ne s'y est pas trompée grâce à Dieu; elle est instruite par l'expérience des 9 dernières années, ce qu'il lui faut, ce ne sont pas des promesses, si belles soient-elles; ce sont des preuves tangibles, des concessions effectives.

Le gouvernement Greenway lui avait donné ces concessions, et en votant en faveur de ses candidats, la minorité a prouvé qu'elle était prête à appuyer fidèlement quiconque lui serait sincèrement favorable.

S'il n'en avait pas été ainsi les mêmes conservateurs qui accusent aujourd'hui si bêtement la minorité de déloyauté, auraient été les premiers à lui reprocher son attitude envers Greenway, et lorsque nous serions venus leur demander la moindre concession ils nous auraient simplement répondu:

"Vous avez voté contre le gouvernement Greenway qui s'était compromis pour vous en vous faisant des concessions; ceci nous prouve que l'on ne peut compter sur vous et nous ne sommes pas disposés à nous compromettre à notre tour pour des gens qui nous abandonnent sans vergogne".

Dieu merci, nous sommes désormais à l'abri de ce reproche, nous avons les mains nettes et la conscience libre; ... nous avons affirmé que le seul moyen d'assurer l'appui de la minorité c'était de lui rendre justice; que le succès de nos intérêts religieux et nationaux domine pour nous toute préoccupation de parti.³⁵

L'Echo had a better perception of why the French Catholics had voted the way they did, but failed to appreciate that no matter how the French Catholics voted, the results would be given an unsympathetic interpretation by the hostile majority. If they voted Conservative, it would be taken as ingratitude, and if they voted Liberal, it would be taken as an expression of satisfaction with the status quo. In this sense, French Catholics remained outside the political system. They had reintegrated themselves into the province's political parties but remained almost totally divorced from province-wide issues, except for a persistent and probably unwarranted concern over how the majority would interpret their behaviour.

After the election, L'Echo was hard put to conceal its embarrassment and even suggested that the three French Liberal M.L.A.'s abandon

³⁵L'Echo de Manitoba, December 14, 1899.

the party-line and barter with the new Conservative government:

Quand aux représentants de la minorité, ils n'ont qu'une chose à faire: attendre.

Ils ont l'indépendance morale et matérielle complète, absolue; ils sont libres de toute entrave; ils sont les juges et les maîtres de la situation.

Ils ont prouvé qu'ils savaient être à l'occasion des amis sincères, ou des adversaires redoutables, ils ont dans leur mandat, la paix ou la guerre, il dépendra du parti au pouvoir de choisir entre l'un ou l'autre.³⁶

For its part, Le Manitoba tried to show that the French Catholics really had not voted Liberal after all. It tried to explain Carillon and La Vérendrye by blaming the Mennonites.³⁷ However, even with the exclusion of the Mennonite polls, the result remains the same.³⁸ Le Manitoba tried to explain away the St. Boniface results by saying that many Conservatives who would have voted for Bernier could not support Lauzon and voted Liberal instead. There was only limited truth in this. Since the same candidates ran in both elections, neutralizing the personality factor, the massive shift in voting had to be produced by other issues, especially when the same result occurred in all three ridings.³⁹

The percentage of the popular vote obtained by the Conservative candidates in the three constituencies in 1896-97 was 58% while the Liberals (or Independents) obtained 42%. In 1899, the Liberal share was up to 55% while the Conservatives were down to 45%--a switch of 13%.

³⁶L'Echo de Manitoba, December 14, 1899.

³⁷Le Manitoba, December 13, 1899.

³⁸This conclusion is based solely on the poll by poll results for Carillon given in the Free Press of July 21, 1903. The poll locations for La Vérendrye are not given but, since there were much fewer Mennonites in La Vérendrye than in Carillon, there is no possible way in which they could have determined the results there.

³⁹See Table 2, page 56.

T A B L E 2

COMPARISON OF THE 1896-97 AND 1899 GENERAL
ELECTION RESULTS*

		LIBERALS	CONSERVATIVES
ST. BONIFACE			
(J.-B. Lauzon, Cons., v. S. A. D. Bertrand, Lib.)	1897	35%	<u>65%</u>
	1899	<u>52</u>	48
LA VERENDRYE			
(T. Paré, Cons., v. W. Lagimodière, Lib.)	1896	46	<u>54</u>
	1899	<u>57</u>	43
CARILLON			
(R. Marion, Cons., v. M. Jérôme, Lib.)	1896	47	<u>53</u>
	1899	<u>58</u>	42

*Note: figures expressed to nearest percentage point.

Source: Canadian Parliamentary Companion.

By this switch, the French Catholics had indicated that they wished to return to the mainstream of Manitoba life. They voted Liberal, expecting a Liberal return to power. They indicated a qualified acceptance of the Laurier-Greenway compromise: because of their relative concentration, the Catholics in the three constituencies were more privileged under the compromise than those in Winnipeg and elsewhere in the province. They demonstrated on the one hand that a simple prise de position on the part of the local church hierarchy was not sufficient to determine their behaviour⁴⁰ and, on the other hand, that a papal encyclical could have considerable impact. Twice, the French had shown their desire to be part of the "mainstream" by a flexible, moderate, and progressive element switching from Conservative to Liberal. Twice, they were accused of disloyalty and twice the results were unhappy--the first time ended in disaster, the second, in acute embarrassment.

The 1899 election was the last one in which the School Question occupied all the energies of the French Catholic politicians. The School Question has persisted in electoral politics to the present, but with less emotionalism than it aroused in the 1890's. By the turn of the century, the Franco-Manitobans' second experiment in political brokerage, however unsuccessful, was leading them together with the rest of the province into the age of the "political machine."

⁴⁰This attitude was similar to that of the French Canadians of Quebec. Contrary to conventional interpretation, Quebec voters in 1896 did not technically disobey their bishops. The bishops had not explicitly told their flocks to vote Conservative, but to vote for candidates who pledged themselves to support the Remedial Bill--which, to them, meant the same thing. In order to get around this, all but three Liberal candidates pledged themselves to support a Remedial Bill--knowing full well that in the event of a Liberal victory, such a bill would not be introduced. (Morice, op. cit., page 141.)

CHAPTER IV

THE MINORITY AND THE MACHINE

The French Canadians of St. Boniface did not have to wait long to extricate themselves from the politically embarrassing situation they had placed themselves in the 1899 general election. The opportunity was afforded them by the resignation of S. Bertrand¹ which brought on the by-election of November 24, 1900. This by-election also provided them with a foretaste of the political intrigue which was to characterize the next decade and a half.

Coming less than twelve months after the general election of 1899, the issues and personality clashes of that campaign were still in the minds of many, especially those directly involved. Joseph Bernier again won the Conservative nomination and J.-B. Lauzon again made threatening noises suggesting that he might try to repeat his performance of the previous year. A Liberal candidate appeared but, two weeks before voting day, he withdrew. L'Echo de Manitoba explained his reasons this way:

Sur ces entrefaits, des représentations venues du Haut-Lieu [written with capital letters, this meant the Archbishop] nous firent connaître qu'on désirerait dans l'intérêt supérieur de la minorité, voir le comté de St. Boniface représenté par un député conservateur ami du gouvernement Roblin.

On nous fit valoir que la solution définitive de la question

¹Bertrand resigned to contest Provencher Constituency in the November 7, 1900 federal general election. He was narrowly defeated by the incumbent Conservative and "elder statesman" of French Manitoba, A. A. C. La Rivière.

scolaire résidait entièrement dans la bonne volonté de la législature locale; que l'on avait les meilleures raisons d'espérer dans la bonne volonté du gouvernement Roblin; l'on nous fit même entrevoir l'existence de certaines promesses; et dans ces conditions l'on nous demandait de ne point compromettre les espoirs conçus, en faisant élire un député de l'opposition dans Saint-Boniface.

Nous ne pouvions nous refuser à de telles représentations ... et en conséquence, notre devoir, comme amis sincères de la minorité, comme catholiques désireux de voir régler la question scolaire, notre devoir était de ne point compromettre ... les possibilités quelconques d'amélioration.

Nous nous sommes donc effacés.²

The Liberals had won St. Boniface precisely on the issue of co-operating with the government and would have been hard put to reverse their position so quickly. Their withdrawal also indicated that popular feeling favoured accommodation.

Why then did Archbishop Langevin intervene? In 1897, he had drastically intervened and had secured the election of his man. In 1899, he had been formally neutral and the fact that everyone knew where he stood did nothing to stop what he undoubtedly considered a most unfortunate result. He was now faced with a chance to correct that mistake. Joseph Bernier, the choice of the Conservative Convention and of the Archbishop, was totally convinced of the need to restore the status quo ante 1890. Not unlike his contemporary, Henri Bourrassa, he was young (28 years old), ambitious, and an effective speaker, with high ideals to which he was prepared to sacrifice his political ambition as indeed he had the previous year. Like Bourrassa, also, he had devoted admirers and strong detractors, both within and outside his party. He was not a man whom the Liberals could easily support. Yet, Bernier refused to withdraw in favour of a more acceptable candidate. If L'Echo de Manitoba is to be believed, Lauzon had consequently asked Victor

²L'Echo de Manitoba, November 22, 1900.

Mager, former reeve of the Municipality of St. Boniface, to present himself as an alternate Conservative.³

Mager, who had reason to expect ecclesiastical intervention in favour of Bernier, therefore resorted to a little skulduggery. Early Sunday morning, Mager informed the Archbishop that he was withdrawing from the race. Later that same day, after all the masses were said and Langevin had lost his last chance to address his flock before the election, Mager announced that he was still in the running. Needless to say, Langevin was furious. Mager had underestimated his Archbishop; there was still one way in which Langevin could reach the faithful, and he used it.

He issued the following declaration which Le Manitoba printed three days before the election, and which the Conservatives put up as a poster all over the city:

Déclaration de Mgr L'Archevêque de
Saint-Boniface

Comme on s'est permis publiquement de mettre en doute ma fidélité à la parole donnée, voici les faits:

Proposition des Catholiques Libéraux

1° J'ai déclaré d'abord jeudi, 15 courant, que je n'aurais pas d'objections à la candidature de M. Mager, si c'était le moyen de sauver la situation, mais j'ai ajouté qu'il me fallait consulter avant d'agir, que je ne connaissais pas assez les hommes et les choses.

Ma Neutralité

2° J'ai promis de ne pas intervenir davantage lorsqu'on m'a annoncé, vendredi dernier 16 courant, à midi, par téléphone, que M. Mager était mis sur les rangs par un groupe catholique; mais j'ai cru simplement devoir rappeler à M. Mager qu'il m'avait promis de travailler pour M. Jos. Bernier. M. Mager ne m'avait pas parlé de sa candidature. Après la nomination des

³Perennial candidate Lauzon probably did not run himself in order not to antagonize the Archbishop. L'Echo says that "Mgr Langevin avait pris nettement position contre M. Lauzon" (November 22, 1900).

candidats, samedi, j'ai donné instructions à tous mes prêtres, par M. le Vicaire-Général, de rester neutres, de ne rien dire en chaire, puisque les deux candidats se déclaraient en faveur du gouvernement local.

Résignation de M. V. Mager

3^o Quand M. Mager a résigné spontanément le dimanche matin, 18 courant, je l'ai approuvé et je suis même allé, accompagné de M. le Vicaire-Général, le féliciter sincèrement; mais quand M. Mager a retiré sa résignation, le même jour, dimanche soir, je ne l'ai ni approuvé ni félicité, et je regrette qu'il ait persisté à se présenter, parce qu'il fait du tort à la cause catholique, étant moins apte que M. Jos. Bernier, avocat, à nous rendre les services voulus.

Voici les faits, et je défie qui que ce soit de les démentir selon la vérité.

Adélard, Archevêque de Saint-Boniface⁴

The election produced no surprises since not only had Langevin intervened in favour of Bernier, but so had Premier R. P. Roblin. Since there was general agreement that a pro-government candidate should be elected, Bernier's victory was assured and he won by 436 to 282.

One would have expected L'Echo to protest vehemently against the Archbishop's tactics. Instead, it excused him on the ground that he had been duped into thinking that Mager was really a Liberal. It blamed the Conservatives for making posters out of the Archbishop's declaration, not the declaration itself. When two individuals petitioned the courts to have the election annulled on grounds of undue influence, L'Echo denounced them for stirring up anti-catholicism among the English-speaking population.⁵ Instead of denouncing the secret "understandings" between Langevin and Roblin, it chastised the Conservatives for being too explicit about them, thus compromising their success.

The 1900 by-election was a good example of the stifling of the democratic spirit in a threatened minority. Contrary to the 1870's and

⁴Le Manitoba, November 21, 1900.

⁵L'Echo de Manitoba, January 10, 1901.

1880's when they had some power in the province and the early 1890's when they believed they still had some, the French were now becoming reconciled with their status as a vulnerable minority and were acting in consequence. It would be another sixteen years, however, before the lesson would be fully learnt.

The 1900 by-election also brought to light the alliance between Premier Roblin and Archbishop Langevin which was to influence elections in the French constituencies for the next fifteen years. The alliance was not altogether "unholy" because Roblin's sympathy for the French Catholic cause in Manitoba had antedated Langevin's arrival: he was the only Protestant member of the Legislature who voted against the Schools Act of 1890. The sincerity of Langevin's esteem is manifest in the following excerpt from a letter written to Roblin after the latter's resignation in 1915:

You have always been loyal to me, and this souvenir I keep in my heart as my consolation and my happiness. You never made a promise that you could not fulfill. Why did not our fellow citizens have the same broadness of mind and the same goodwill?⁶

Langevin's biographer would explain it this way:

Nous avons vu que, sans vouloir remédier par voie législative à la situation scolaire dans cette province, son premier ministre, R. P. Roblin, s'était toujours montré tolérant vis-à-vis des écoles catholiques de la campagne. En conséquence, le prélat lui avait voué une vraie reconnaissance et l'honorait d'une estime qu'il ne pouvait cacher.⁷

At the time of the 1900 by-election, however, Roblin had been premier for only a few months, and the kind of "tolerance" referred to had not yet manifested itself.

⁶Archives of the Archbishopric of St. Boniface, Langevin Papers, Langevin to Roblin, May 12, 1915.

⁷Morice, op. cit., page 359.

Hence, the Free Press could darkly report a "deal":

Some ten or twelve days ago Mr. Roblin wended his way to St. Boniface and sought an interview with Archbishop Langevin. He had a bargain to make. He desired the election of a supporter in the by-election then pending in that division, and he proposed that if the Archbishop would secure the election of a Roblin man, in return the government of Manitoba would make some grant, or introduce legislation that would meet the views of the Archbishop and his associates in reference to the schools of this province. Mr. Roblin, therefore, intimated that the new government were desirous of being friendly with the French-speaking population, and held out some hopes in this regard. The Archbishop promised to do what he could, and subsequent events show that he took an active interest in promoting the candidature of Mr. Roblin's nominee, Mr. Joseph Bernier.⁸

This "deal," probably based on mutual esteem as well as self-interest, was in any event to continue relatively intact until 1915. Yet in one important respect, the by-election of 1900 was uncharacteristic of the period that followed. The School Question still dominated the scene more than it did later on, and also the bitter partisanship and blatant corruption had not yet begun.

The first battle of the great partisan war was the 1903 general election. The establishment of rigid and organized political parties, interrupted by the School Question, had resumed in the late 1890's. To the Franco-Manitobans, the 1899 election had still been a School Question election, but with many partisan overtones. In the interval since then, party lines had been drawn tighter. A Conservative Club had been founded in St. Boniface. L'Echo de Manitoba was now printed in Ottawa rather than in Winnipeg--reflecting the fact that, for the French Liberals of Manitoba, their real "home" was the federal party. A new electoral law had been introduced requiring voters to register; this

⁸Manitoba Free Press, November 24, 1900.

permitted political parties to organize registration and thereby obtain a greater measure of control over the electorate. Most important, as far as the French were concerned, was the fact that, in the area of the three constituencies under study, the compromise had now been in satisfactory operation for over a half dozen years and that prospects for over-all improvement in the rest of the province seemed dim. Neither political party wanted to "re-open the School Question." This meant that even though the School Question would continue to be debated, other issues would enter the picture--the French would start voting as Manitobans again rather than as an aggrieved minority.

L'Echo was quite explicit in counselling this attitude:

Nous ne devons point oublier que nous sommes solitaires des autres fractions de l'électorat en ce qui regarde la bonne administration et la prospérité de notre province.

.....
Si nous ignorons de parti-pris l'intérêt général de la province ... nous nous exposerions par la suite à un isolement complet qui ne peut qu'être au détriment même de notre intérêt particulier.

.....
C'est le moyen le plus sûr de conquérir l'estime de nos compatriotes anglais et autres, c'est acquérir le droit d'exiger à leur tour leur bienveillante coopération pour faire respecter nos droits propres.

L'on n'a que trop oublié cette vérité par le passé, et cette méprise n'a pas peu contribué à éloigner de nous nombre des mieux intentionnés parmi nos concitoyens de langue anglaise, pour qui l'intérêt général prime toute autre considération.⁹

The point that L'Echo was trying to make, of course, was that l'intérêt général required the defeat of the Roblin government. It then went on to discuss such topics as the budget surplus, taxes, railway and agricultural policy while its antagonist, Le Manitoba talked of " ... l'état prospère de la province, une saine politique de chemins de fer ..."¹⁰

⁹L'Echo de Manitoba, July 16, 1903.

¹⁰Le Manitoba, June 3, 1903.

This was the first time such debate had taken place at election time for over a decade, and both newspapers were self-conscious of the fact.

There were other signs that the French were reintegrating themselves in the political life and parties of the province. In the 90's, both newspapers talked of "using" the political parties to their ends, and neither of them expressed any support for an English-speaking candidate of whatever party. In 1903, Le Manitoba asked its readers in the riding of Morris to support Colin Campbell, an English-speaking Protestant freemason, against a French Catholic named Comeault.¹¹ Needless to say, L'Echo accused its confrère of being a traitor to the race.¹²

In spite of a willingness to debate l'intérêt général and a greater participation in the provincial political parties, however, the bulk of campaigning was still based on l'intérêt propre. The Roblin government had done what it could to reap some benefits from this intérêt propre. Apart from ingratiating itself with the clergy for its lenient administration of the Schools Act, it built a French normal school, started construction on a highway to link St. Boniface with some of the French communities on the east side of the Red River, gave the French a fourth constituency (Assiniboia) in which they would be in a majority, and the Premier himself made a hundred dollar donation to St. Boniface Hospital. All of this took place soon before the election and was loudly trumpeted by Le Manitoba.

On the surface, the Liberals seemed to be at a considerable disadvantage. Few people seriously expected the ageing and defeated Greenway to regain power over a progressive government riding the crest

¹¹Ibid., April 15, 1903.

¹²L'Echo de Manitoba, April 23, 1903.

of prosperity. Indeed, for the French Liberals, Greenway was their greatest liability. "M. Greenway est le persécuteur de notre race," claimed the Conservatives, "voter pour les candidats de M. Greenway, c'est comme si vous votiez pour M. Greenway lui-même."¹³ L'Echo, for its part, unearthed some of Roblin's legislature votes of 1890 and interpreted each one which was different from the way French Canadians voted as proof that he was the "persécuteur de notre race."¹⁴ This kind of sophistry and name-calling went on for much of the campaign. The Conservatives seemed to have got the best of this match, however, since by voting day, all the French Liberal candidates had felt it necessary to disassociate themselves from their leader and now called themselves "Liberals independent of Greenway."¹⁵ After the election, L'Echo had to admit that "le parti libéral n'avait à sa tête aucune personnalité d'un poids suffisant pour provoquer l'enthousiasme."¹⁶

The government's major advantage was that it had given Mgr. Langevin a free hand to organize his schools within the outside limits of the law. Commenting on the government's decision to build a French normal school in St. Boniface, Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface said:

Il n'est que juste de dire que nos gouvernants ont montré un bon vouloir très appréciable dans leurs rapports avec les catholiques pour les questions de maîtres catholiques, de brevets, de livres bilingues, etc., etc. C'est un fair play auquel nous n'avions pas été habitués depuis 1890. Rien n'est encore réglé selon la loi en notre faveur, mais il y a eu au Manitoba, ce que le Souverain Pontife a appelé "la bcenne -

¹³Le Manitoba, July 15, 1903.

¹⁴L'Echo de Manitoba, July 9, 1903.

¹⁵Ibid., July 30, 1903.

¹⁶Le Manitoba, June 10 and September 9, 1903.

volonté des hommes" dans son encyclique Affari Vos.¹⁷

Le Manitoba considered that statement to be an open endorsement of Roblin by the Archbishop and reprinted the text in three different issues before the election. There are also indications that the clergy took some part in the election although this was evidently neither explicit nor wide-spread.

After the election, L'Echo made the following accusations, which may or may not have been sour grapes:

... il paraît avéré qu'en un grand nombre de localités, les membres du clergé ont pris une part active, soit de façon occulte, soit au grand jour, en faveur des candidats de M. Roblin.¹⁸

The other side of the coin was that the French Conservatives had to defend a government which had not changed the law in the least while the Liberals could claim that all the French Catholics had, they owed it to Laurier and Greenway. The Liberals took the following attitude:

L'on nous faisait entendre que seuls, ils [les Conservateurs] pouvaient régler définitivement la question scolaire.

Les Libéraux de Saint-Boniface, en 1900, ont retiré leur candidature libérale pour ne point compromettre les espérances qu'on leur faisait entrevoir.

Or, non seulement ils ne nous ont obtenu aucune nouvelle concession, mais ils n'ont même pas tenté, de peur d'embarrasser leurs chefs, la moindre action parlementaire dans ce but.¹⁹

The positions were completely reversed from 1899. The Liberals now expressed discontent while the Conservatives defended accommodation with the government.

¹⁷Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, April 28, 1903. (Les Cloches was a monthly religious-historical review founded by Mgr. Langevin in 1903. It was, and still is, the "official" voice of the diocese.)

¹⁸L'Echo de Manitoba, July 30, 1903.

¹⁹Ibid., July 16, 1903.

One pre-election incident brought these positions into focus and may have given the French Liberals a boost as a result of the wide press coverage given to it. On June 21, exactly one month before the election, a group of Winnipeg Catholics sent a delegation to the Premier to explain to him the problems of the Catholic minority and to ask for some measure of relief. The timing was most unpropitious as it forced the Premier to state publicly that the School Question was closed and he could do nothing for them. This caused no small embarrassment for the French Conservatives, and it permitted the Liberals to pose as champions of the minority. Le Manitoba claimed the whole thing was a Liberal plot to embarrass the Premier.²⁰ L'Echo somewhat weakened its case by saying that it was a Conservative plot to give the Premier a chance to justify his do-nothing stand.

The wild exaggeration in the polemics over whether Roblin or Greenway was ennemi de la race, over the race and religion of the candidates in Morris, over the Winnipeg Catholics' démarche, or over the supposed preferences of the clergy, indicates that there was no crucial issue at stake for the French Catholics in Manitoba in this election. It was simply open political warfare with sections of the population identifying with either the rouges or the bleus and in which nothing was sacred, not even the lenient administration of the Schools Act. The Liberals even blamed Roblin for that:

M. R. P. Roblin a fermé les yeux sur la manière dont étaient conduites nos écoles, il a laissé le champ libre à ses thuriféraires qui en ont profité pour faire de l'arbitraire en maintes circonstances, au grand détriment de la cause de l'éducation elle-même.²¹

²⁰Le Manitoba, July 8, 1903.

²¹L'Echo de Manitoba, July 16, 1903.

The results of the 1903 election were not very enlightening and can best be described as a standoff. On the surface, the Liberals would seem to have won, taking three out of the four constituencies in which the French were in a majority (St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Assiniboia). However, the lone Conservative majority in Carillon was bigger than the three Liberal majorities combined.²² It is also interesting to note that the English-speaking Conservative in Morris took four of the five polls in French areas, while N. Comeault took only his home town of St. Jean Baptiste.²³

In St. Boniface, first results gave Bernier a majority of one, but a recount gave his opponent the same majority. Le Manitoba's claim that Bernier took a majority of the French vote is probably correct. Bernier obtained majorities in Northern St. Boniface polls, and H. Chevrier obtained majorities in polls bearing English names.²⁴ In La Vérendrye, J.-B. Lauzon, now out of favour with St. Boniface Conservatives, had changed constituency and had lost to the incumbent Liberal (and perennial candidate) W. Lagimodière. In Carillon, two newcomers (a rare occurrence in French constituencies) battled it out resulting in the first of many victories for Albert Préfontaine,²⁵ the lone Con-

²²See Table 3, page 70.

²³Manitoba Free Press, July 22, 1903.

²⁴This conclusion is based on results published in the Manitoba Free Press of July 22, 1903. Since records of poll boundaries were automatically destroyed two years after an election in Manitoba, ethnic composition of individual polls can only be educated guesses.

²⁵Born in 1861, Albert Préfontaine had emigrated from Greenfield, Massachusetts in the 1880's. A farmer and contractor, president of the "St. Pierre Trading Company," he had been reeve of the municipality of de Salaberry and active in agricultural organizations before 1903. He would later be leader of the opposition for a short time during the

T A B L E 3

RESULTS OF THE JULY 20, 1903 GENERAL ELECTION

ST. BONIFACE

H. Chevrier (L)	593		
Jos. Bernier (C)	592	Liberal majority	1

LA VERENDRYE

W. Lagimodière (L)	348		
J.-B. Lauzon (C)	337	Liberal majority	11

CARILLON

A. Préfontaine (C)	399		
A. Hébert (L)	308	Conservative majority	91

ASSINIBOIA

J. Préfontaine (L)	415		
G. Caron (C)	398	Liberal majority	17

Source: Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1904 edition.

servative elected.

In spite of this disappointing result, Roblin's courting of the French had not all been in vain, for though he had captured only one seat, he had nevertheless managed a 6.7% gain in popular vote.²⁶ If any decision was made by the French in 1903, it was to become fully engaged in the partisan warfare of the times and to use, in a somewhat confused manner, their problems of a minority as weapons in that war.

In the interval between 1903 and 1907, the date of the next general election, the boom continued in Manitoba, and the Roblin government continued to claim credit for it; the two provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created, thus intensifying the federal-provincial dispute over boundary extension and bringing about the "Sbarette incident"; in 1906, the Liberals chose a new leader in the person of Edward Brown, who showed no greater sympathy for the French than his predecessor; in 1905, the French Liberals had lost L'Echo de Manitoba, which had been literally pressured out of existence after its criticism of the clergy's role in the 1903 election.

The political setting of the 1907 general election, and the ones following, is best described by Manitoba historian W. L. Morton:

The truth was that both parties practiced flagrant electoral corruption, that all appointments to the Bench and civil service were political, and that Manitoban politics were the scene of an unrelenting struggle between the provincial machine and its federal rival.²⁷

The Franco-Manitobans had become part and parcel of this struggle and

Norris administration and would go on to serve in the Bracken cabinet as Provincial Secretary and Minister of Agriculture.

²⁶See Table 4, page 76.

²⁷Morton, op. cit., page 294.

corruption. Even when their minority interests were at stake, judging by Le Manitoba, they paid much less attention to them.

The most controversial issue in the campaign was the Boundary Question, and this was in no small way linked with the School Question. Manitoba's expansion eastward had been thwarted by a judicial decision in 1884; its expansion westward prevented by the creation of Saskatchewan and its expansion northwards was now being stifled by the federal government. During a by-election in 1905, it was revealed that suggestions had been made by Cardinal Sbaretti, papal delegate in Canada, to the Attorney-General of Manitoba, to the effect that if some modification were made to the Manitoba Schools Act, the extension of Manitoba's boundaries might be facilitated. The Laurier government did not want the Catholics of Keewatin deprived of their schools when the Territory was annexed to Manitoba. As Manitobans, the French would want to see the province expand, but as Catholics, they were concerned about the fate of their brethren.

As expected, they divided on the issue, but only in a strictly partisan way. Not only did the French Conservatives accuse the Laurier government of refusing to extend the province's boundaries, but they also blamed it for the state of Catholic schools in the province which served as an excuse to refuse extension:

Le gouvernement n'a pas pu rétablir les écoles séparées parce que les libéraux, encore une fois, ont toujours su attiser le feu et empêcher l'esprit public généralement de se rallier à l'opinion modérée ...

.....
 Mais à qui la faute, si ce n'est aux libéraux, au fameux et soi-disant règlement Laurier qui a empêché jusqu'à présent que nous ayons plus !

Où, messieurs, c'est votre faute ! Si vous n'aviez pas fermé la porte à nos espérances, si vous n'aviez pas cherché continuellement à enrayer nos efforts, nous aurions eu avant

aujourd'hui, les institutions scolaires qui nous sont chères. Et l'incident Sbarretti n'aurait jamais eu lieu.²⁸

This was the only statement made by Le Manitoba, in spite of the fact that Brown's declaration that he would rigidly apply the Schools Act should have been the target. The rest of its pages, outside of name-calling and personal denunciation of opposition candidates, were filled with the following kind of battle cries:

Il s'agit de travailler avec confiance et une inlassable persévérance. Pas une journée de ralentissement dans l'assaut; non plus, pas d'enthousiasme décevant. Simplement du travail constant, méthodique, de l'assiduité dans les comités, une surveillance rigide contre les actes des adversaires.²⁹

Joseph Bernier, the man of principle of a few years ago, was now describing himself thus:

... je résume en deux mots mon programme: ie suis un partisan du gouvernement Roblin.³⁰ (italics his!)

In the face of Le Manitoba's failure to exploit the Liberal leader's veiled threats against leniency in the application of the Schools Act, the issue was picked up by the Archbishop. He probably acted in the manner of the times, using the pulpit on the last Sunday before voting day, to exhort his flock to repulse this latest threat against them. His official biography explains what happened this way:

En dehors de ces soucis d'ordre purement ecclésiastique, il y avait toujours pour lui la question scolaire qui était loin d'être réglée. Roblin, chef du gouvernement conservateur, fermait bien les yeux sur les accrocs à la loi néfaste que la conscience publique imposait dans les campagnes, mais cette latitude n'était consacré par aucun texte légal, et un gouvernement hostile pouvait au premier moment l'interdire.

Or il arriva qu'à des élections générales le chef de l'opposition, un M. Edouard Brown, eut le front de déclarer que si son parti pouvait arriver au pouvoir, il appliquerait

²⁸Le Manitoba, February 27, 1907.

²⁹Ibid., February 6, 1907.

³⁰Ibid.

sans merci la loi des écoles dans tous ses points.

C'était un défi aux catholiques. Leur chef releva le gant et appuya le parti de tolérance, avec le résultat qu'aucun candidat libéral ne fut élu par les premiers et que Brown lui-même fut battu dans son propre comté par près de 300 voix.

Ce succès électoral fut l'origine, pour le Free Press de Winnipeg, d'une aversion prononcée pour Mgr Langevin, aversion qui, dans la suite, se traduisit constamment par les accusations les plus étranges, auxquelles le prélat dédaignait le plus souvent de répondre ou de faire répondre.³¹

Although Langevin's influence was not as great as his biographer alleged, he may have been responsible for the slight shift in votes which did occur and which, in turn, caused the three French Liberals to be defeated. It was said later that "The concord which existed between the Archbishop of St. Boniface and Premier Roblin exacerbated the Manitoba Liberals and accentuated their already existing secularism."³² This was a vicious circle because the more "secular" the Liberals became, the more the Archbishop fought them. Thus the escalation which was to culminate in the Thornton Law was under way.

In 1907, both St. Boniface and La Vérendrye had the same candidates running as in 1903 and in both cases the seats went from Liberal to Conservative. Joseph Bernier, having been defeated by one vote in 1903, now had a majority of 62 over Horace Chevrier. J.-B. Lauzon got back in the House as member for La Vérendrye by obtaining a majority of 23 over Lagimodière, whose majority in 1903 had been 11. Albert Préfontaine increased his majority in Carillon from 91 to 105. The total shift of votes was only 1.7%,³³ but this had been sufficient to

³¹Morice, op. cit., page 239.

³²W. B. Ready, "The Political Implications of the Manitoba School Question, 1896-1916" (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1948), page 132.

³³See Table 4, page 76.

defeat the incumbent Liberals.³⁴ Such was the extent of the Archbishop's "victory."

The 1910 election was a virtual repetition of the 1907 one. The Liberals again picked a new leader (T. C. Norris) just before the election and he inspired no greater confidence in the French than his predecessor. The Liberal Party had again taken stands which implied a threat to the French and the Archbishop again intervened in favour of the Conservatives with the same relative degree of success. The campaign was carried out in the same mudslinging manner with Le Manitoba giving hardly a mention to issues of concern to the minority. It confined itself to praise for all Tories and to condemnation of the sub-human species who dared oppose them. Its new antagonist, Le Nouvelliste, founded in 1907 as the Liberal successor to L'Echo de Manitoba, acted in a like manner. It is perhaps a reflection on the complete politicisation of all public institutions at the time that the Provincial Library of Manitoba has no record of this publication. There is thus no record of it left other than references made to it in other newspapers.

The fact that in both 1907 and 1910, Le Manitoba did not jump on the obvious anti-French deficiencies of the Liberals in order to use them for all they were worth in the French constituencies is easily explained. Le Manitoba was no longer a French newspaper with a Conservative affiliation. It was now simply a Conservative paper. In years past, when Le Manitoba took up French Catholic causes in the name of the Conservative Party, hostile newspapers like the Free Press would translate and reproduce its articles and present them as proof that the Con-

³⁴In Assiniboia, the incumbent Liberal got trounced by 550 votes to 311. This was probably more of a personal victory for Aimé Bénéard, the Conservative who would repeat this performance a number of times.

T A B L E 4
PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN THE
THREE CONSTITUENCIES UNDER STUDY
DURING THE "PARTISAN ERA"

<u>Election</u>	<u>Conservatives</u>	<u>Liberals</u>	<u>Conservative Gain</u>
1899	44.8	55.2	
1903	51.5	48.5	6.7
1907	53.2	46.8	1.7
1910	54.3	45.7	1.1
1914	55.1	44.9	.8

Source: The Canadian Parliamentary Guide.

servative Party was dominated by Papists or was ready to sell out the province to the French. Now, however, Le Manitoba was Conservative first, and French or Catholic second, so the Party was no longer embarrassed.³⁵ If party interests dictated disassociation from the minority, then Le Manitoba and its Liberal equivalent were obliged to accede.³⁶ By 1910, the minority had thus gotten itself seriously entangled with the political machines of the times. However inadequate its printed press may have been, it was now lost to the machine. It was in reaction to this state of affairs that La Liberté, the first truly independent newspaper, was founded three years later. Archbishop Langevin played a leading role in its founding and until then he and his clergy were the only ones to give any politically disinterested leadership to the minority.

Throughout the years of hardening partisanship which culminated in the elections of 1910 and 1914, the Conservative Party made the most headway with French voters.³⁷ In every election during the Roblin years, the Conservatives captured a successively greater share of the popular vote. In his 1948 study, George Ready describes the position of the Catholic Liberals:

The Catholic Liberals of Manitoba remained steadfast in their adherence to the Federal Party while they became a rump in Manitoba, scolded by their ecclesiastical superiors, scorned by their erstwhile associates, and used by their former oppo-

³⁵In all fairness to Le Manitoba, it should be noted that in 1910, it did blast the compulsory education plank of the Liberal platform--but then, so did Roblin.

³⁶This probably explains L'Echo's backing down in its support of the démarche of the Winnipeg Catholics in 1907.

³⁷See Table 4, page 76.

nents; their position was not a happy one.³⁸

Scolded, scorned and used, they have been, but a rump, they were not. Even at their lowest ebb, in 1914, the Liberals still managed to retain 45% of the vote and elect a member to the legislature. Even though their minority interests should have led the French Catholics to a massive support of the Roblin government, party lines were so frozen that it took fourteen years and four general elections before they would give it what could, at best, be called strong support.

This rigidity of party lines was due to the battle of the provincial and federal party machines. For both parties, the provincial and federal apparatus was one and the same; one was a Tory or a Grit, period, without further distinction. This was awkward for the French because federally, their sentiments tended more toward Laurier while provincially, their local needs made them incline toward Roblin. Because of the partisan frenzy which they had espoused as strongly, if not more than, the rest of the province, the bulk of French Laurier supporters would vote Liberal in provincial elections out of loyalty to him, and the bulk of Roblin supporters would vote Conservative in federal elections for the same reason. The Liberals held Provencher from 1904 onwards,³⁹ and in those years, Provencher encompassed the three provincial constituencies under study.

Mgr. Langevin himself was a "partisan" but he was a selective one:

Mgr Langevin passa généralement pour conservateur: il l'était, et devait l'être, au Manitoba sous peine de forfaire à ses obligations. Il était tout aussi bon libéral dans la partie de son

³⁸Ready, op. cit., page 132.

³⁹See Table 5, page 79.

T A B L E 5

ELECTION RESULTS IN PROVENCHER FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY
1900 - 1917

1900	A. C. La Rivière (C)	1528
	S. A. D. Bertrand (L)	1484
1904	J.-E. Cyr (L)	1896
	A. C. La Rivière (C)	1886
1908	J. P. Molloy (L)	2719
	A. C. La Rivière (C)	2259
1911	J. P. Molloy (L)	3049
	J. A. F. Bleau (C)	2668
1917	J. P. Molloy (Opp.)	2035
	J. R. Johns (Gov.)	1850

Source: Canadian Parliamentary Guide.

diocèse qui faisait parti de la nouvelle province de la Saskatchewan.⁴⁰

His biographer reflected Langevin's own thoughts on the partisanship of the period:

Tout le monde connaît la tenacité avec laquelle le Canadien-français s'attache à un parti politique et le suit sans trop faire attention aux grands principes qui peuvent être en cause. Ce n'est guère sérieux, guère digne de gens libres et intelligents, parfois cet aveugle servilisme peut même avoir des conséquences lamentables, ainsi que nous l'avons déjà vu.⁴¹

It is possible that Langevin's frustration at the partisanship of his flock resulted from his inability to prevent them from electing Liberal M.L.A.'s from time to time, or to prevent some of them from espousing causes in the name of their party which he thought were a threat to the minority. Such was the case in 1910, when the leader of the French Liberals and candidate in Carillon, Horace Chevrier,⁴² seconded a motion in support of compulsory education at the Liberal convention of 1910. The Archbishop and the clergy considered compulsory education as espoused by the Liberals to be a threat to the existence of separate schools in the province. He felt it necessary to make the following declaration in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, a declaration which Le Manitoba reproduced for political purposes:

Nous avons à plusieurs reprises exprimé notre opposition à l'instruction obligatoire, compulsory education, et expliqué les motifs sur lesquels elle repose. Voilà pourquoi nous avons vu avec peine une importante convention politique, tenue le mois dernier à Winnipeg par les chefs du parti libéral manitobain, inscrire l'instruction obligatoire à son programme. Nous regrettons surtout que cette proposition ait été favorisée et secondée par M. Horace Chevrier, qui s'est permis de parler au nom de la minorité catholique et française. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'insister longuement pour démontrer que M. Chevrier

⁴⁰Morice, op. cit., page 228.

⁴¹Ibid., page 226.

⁴²Chevrier had been elected for St. Boniface in 1903 and defeated in 1907.

n'a pas mission de parler au nom de la minorité catholique et française et que cette minorité est opposée à l'instruction obligatoire.⁴³

The other Liberal proposal feared by the Archbishop was the reform of the University which threatened the status of St. Boniface College.

Although there is no verifiable record of his doing so, in view of his stand on the Liberal "threats" and in view of the fact that he intervened in the previous and the following elections, Mgr. Langevin probably gave the word to his priests to push their local Conservative in 1910. The results produced no great surprise: Joseph Bernier increased his majority in St. Boniface, Albert Préfontaine held his own in Carillon, and Aimé Bénard, the Conservative in Assiniboia, obtained the largest majority in the province,⁴⁴ a fact probably attributable to the man himself rather than to any particular issue. On the other hand, the Liberals managed to recapture La Vérendrye by nine votes, a feat accomplished by a young bilingual Irish Catholic who unseated the never-too-popular J.-B. Lauzon.

Although the triomphe was not spectacular, there was some substance to Le Manitoba's assessment of the results:

C'est le triomphe de l'esprit de fair play dans l'application des lois éducationnelles injustes. C'est aussi la condamnation de la politique de l'instruction obligatoire et de l'université neutre, placés sous la direction immédiate du gouvernement: deux points importants du parti oppositionniste.⁴⁵

One more election was held before the great catharsis of 1915, and this proved to be the most bitter and partisan of all. The July

⁴³Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, May 1, 1910, and Le Manitoba, May 14, 1910.

⁴⁴Le Manitoba, July 13, 1910. ⁴⁵Ibid., August 3, 1910.

1914 election marked the climax of the "age of the machine" in Manitoba. Yet, if this election was the most important in Manitoba's history, it was in part because a reaction against partisanship had already set in and the Liberals succeeded in capitalizing on it. In putting the blame for "the old style of politics" on the government, the Liberals managed to obtain the open or tacit support of the Grain Growers' Association, the temperance organizations, the Orange Order, and the Political Equality League.⁴⁶ Thus, the 1914 election had more significance than the three previous Liberal-Conservative contests, with a polarization between those who opposed and favoured the status quo around the Liberal and Conservative parties respectively.

Many French Catholics were also sympathetic to some of the aims of the Reform Movement (temperance, for example). By and large, however, they were hostile to it, and not without reason. One of the major targets for "reform" was education, and this could only mean bad news for the French.

Apart from this threat coming from the Liberal Party, moreover, two events had occurred since the previous election which further tied the sympathies of the minority to the government. The first was the adoption of the Coldwell amendments in 1912. These were an attempt by the government to alleviate the problems of the Catholic minorities in urban areas where the Laurier-Greenway compromise could not be satisfactorily applied. They were one of the fruits of the Langevin-Roblin "alliance." Indeed, the Archbishop was more closely associated with these amendments than is generally known; in a secret meeting between

⁴⁶For a thorough discussion of the Reform Movement in Manitoba, see Lionel Orlikow, "A Survey of the Reform Movement in Manitoba, 1910 to 1920" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1955).

himself and Father Paré, the former Conservative member for La Vérendrye, on the one hand, and Robert Rogers, Attorney-General, and Joseph Bernier on the other, Langevin had initialled the text of the proposed law--an act which he regretted the following day.⁴⁷

The operative paragraph of this text gave an new meaning to the word school which would now include "every school building, school room or department in a school building owned by a public school district, presided over by a teacher or teachers."⁴⁸ Thus, instead of only one Catholic teacher per school required under the compromise, each school room could now have its Catholic teacher. Since there was no more than one teacher to a school room in the private schools, these schools might have been brought into the public school system. Nothing ever resulted from these amendments because negotiations on the transfer broke down. According to Langevin:

De longues négociations entre Coldwell et les commissaires de ces centres (Winnipeg et Brandon) n'aboutirent à rien parce que les commissaires posaient des conditions inacceptables: ils insistaient à enlever les crucifix et aux religieuses de porter leurs costumes. Les amendements ne pouvaient forcer les commissaires d'accepter.⁴⁹

Because of their obscure nature and their failure to be implemented, it is doubtful whether Roblin gained much political advantage out of the Coldwell amendments. The debate surrounding them served to underline Roblin's sympathies and, even more so, the Liberals' anti-Catholic bias.

The second event was Joseph Bernier's accession to the cabinet

⁴⁷Archives of the Archbishopric of St. Boniface, Béliveau correspondence, Béliveau to Rev. R. Villeneuve, November 24, 1916.

⁴⁸Revised Statutes of Manitoba, 1913, Cap. 165, s. 252.

⁴⁹Mgr. Langevin quoted in La Liberté, May 20, 1913.

in 1913. The French had not been represented in the cabinet since Prendergast's resignation in 1889--a period of 24 years. The main reason was that a cabinet post meant endorsement of government policy --something even the government supporters among the French were reluctant to do concerning the School Question. By 1913, however, Roblin had proven himself sufficiently conciliatory and, by the Goldwell amendments, had sufficiently modified his original stand "not to reopen the School Question" that Bernier could feel safe in accepting the post.

His decision was not without controversy. It was as a Franco-Manitoban rather than as a Catholic that Bernier accepted the position. The French Catholics had fared better under the Laurier-Greenway compromise than had Winnipeg Catholics. In his study on ethnic influence in St. Boniface politics, Ian Turnbull concluded that "When Bernier was appointed, the French indicated that ethnic considerations were more important than alignment with non-French Roman Catholics."⁵⁰ The Archbishop certainly had mixed feelings about Bernier's nomination and probably would have preferred him not to accept. Langevin issued the following communiqué after the nomination:

La nomination ... est un acte de justice dû aux catholiques ... qui ont droit d'être représentés ... Et c'est la raison pour laquelle Mgr Langevin n'a pas cru devoir s'opposer à la présente nomination, dont l'Honorable Bernier porte seul la responsabilité.

Cependant, il faut bien avouer que dans les circonstances actuelles, cette nomination semble être un don plutôt funeste et gênant fait pour apaiser les catholiques mécontents ...⁵¹
Les catholiques continueront plus que jamais à réclamer ...

La Liberté put the question bluntly to the new minister: "[cette nomi-

⁵⁰Ian Turnbull, "Local Autonomy and Municipal Reorganization: A Study of Ethnic Influence on the Local Politics of St. Boniface" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967), page 64.

⁵¹Reprinted in Le Manitoba, April 30, 1913.

nation] Constituait-elle, oui ou non, une acceptation du STATU QUO ... un acquiescement à la situation actuelle?"⁵² The answer to that question was an only-slightly-qualified YES. The long trek back to the halls of power started in 1899 was now completed.

Equally, if not more, important than the factors favouring a rapprochement with the Conservatives, were the ones which served to alienate the French from the Liberals. In the two previous elections, the educational planks in the Liberal platform--compulsory education and a state university--had scared away many French voters and encouraged the clergy to intervene. In 1914, an even more controversial issue was added: the "reform" of the bilingual clause of the Laurier-Greenway compromise.

No one can deny that educational anarchy existed in Manitoba at the time and that reform was needed. The bilingual system had originally been established to benefit the French and, possibly, the Icelanders. It could not work when applied also to the multiplicity of ethnic groups which came after. The Manitoba Free Press had carried on a relentless campaign against the bilingual system and the Liberal Party picked up the mettle during the election. Although not advocating repeal of the Laurier-Greenway compromise, Norris' interpretation that "The bilingual privilege had been placed in the school law for the benefit of their foreign born friends"⁵³ was somewhat unsettling. The writing was on the wall.

The Coldwell amendments also gave ample opportunity for making veiled anti-Catholic statements. Liberal leader T. C. Norris made a

⁵²La Liberté, May 20, 1913.

⁵³Manitoba Free Press, March 27, 1914.

point of stressing that he had refused to co-operate with Roblin in a bi-partisan attempt at solving the school problem. He had "stood between this province and separate schools."⁵⁴ The Orange order did its part by drawing up a manifesto and asking all candidates to sign it. Only one Conservative did so, but 32 out of the 49 Liberals did.⁵⁵

A serious setback for the French Liberals, and a good indication of what was in store for the minority if the Liberals should come to power, was the convention of the French Liberal Association, held two days before the full provincial convention at the end of March, 1914. Norris had been invited to speak and answer questions by the French Liberals who wanted reassurance.

A number of resolutions were put to Norris. The first, put forth by L. A. Delorme, who would be candidate in St. Boniface, stated that " ... c'est le devoir du gouvernement de cette province de voir à faire donner un enseignement français égal à l'enseignement anglais ..."⁵⁶ To this, Norris answered that the nasty things the Conservatives were saying about him, e.g. that he intended to abolish bilingualism, were simply not true. As proof, he cited a letter he had written "for all in the province of foreign birth . . . that while preserving their mother tongue, they become thoroughly acquainted with the language of their present country."⁵⁷ Thus he not only refused to commit himself on Delorme's resolution, but he also made it clear that he considered

⁵⁴Ibid., June 18, 1914.

⁵⁵Le Manitoba, August 5, 1914. Twelve of those Liberals were successful: they constituted a majority of those elected.

⁵⁶La Liberté, March 31, 1914.

⁵⁷Manitoba Free Press, March 25, 1914.

French to have a status equal to that of the immigrant tongues.

Horace Chevrier, who had previously been chastized by the Archbishop for his advocacy of compulsory education, asked that Catholic children not be forced to attend public schools. Norris promised that legislation would be "broad and generous." P.-A. Talbot, who was to be candidate in La Vérendrye, presented a resolution asking Norris to do something about the francophobia and anti-Catholicism of Liberal newspapers. Norris confined himself to stating that he had no control over what newspapers printed; he did not bother to deplore any of their attitudes. During the question period, Norris was asked whether he was willing to support any remedial action for the Winnipeg Catholics. He replied that he should not commit himself because "it would take a legal mind to decide this question."⁵⁸ He did, however, reiterate the Liberal's promise not to do away with the Laurier-Greenway compromise:

We are in favor of a national school system as fixed by the Laurier-Greenway settlement of 1897, and we intend to respect any rights that any set of people enjoyed as a result of that arrangement.⁵⁹

In spite of this, the French Liberals were apparently quite disappointed with Norris' performance. After his departure, the convention passed a resolution emphasizing that the school question should be of prime concern to the French in the forthcoming election and regretting the fact that neither political party was inclined to better the lot of the minority.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰This account of the French Liberal convention is based on reports in La Liberté of March 31, 1914, and the Manitoba Free Press of March 25, 1914. The latter had a somewhat different interpretation of these events, relating that Norris "received one of the most impressive votes of confidence in his political career at a convention of the French Liberals."

The predicament of the French Liberals is best exemplified by their troubles in La Vérendrye, the only seat they held from 1910. William Molloy, the incumbent, headed for what he thought were greener pastures in Morris constituency. The Liberal nominating convention thereupon named, in absentia, a certain J. W. A. Lane as its standard bearer. After the convention, Lane refused to accept the nomination because "certaines de ses opinions ne lui permettent pas".⁶¹ A second convention sought out Philippe-Adjutor Talbot⁶² from Winnipeg. Talbot accepted, but declared himself an independent Liberal; he insisted on maintaining his total independence from the Party on all questions relating to religion and the French language.⁶³ All to no avail, however, since he would get trounced by J.-B. Lauzon.

The 1914 election was the first one covered by La Liberté, and it endeavoured to maintain its highly proclaimed objectivity. In its first major editorial on the campaign, it noted the portentous omens of the Liberal convention but balanced these off with some unsympathetic remarks made by the Minister of Education in Brandon and concluded that neither party augured well. It therefore urged its readers to vote, not for a party, but for the individual, of whatever party, who was most sympathetic to the interests of the minority.⁶⁴ It maintained that position for nearly three months, but in the face of mounting evidence

⁶¹La Liberté, April 21, 1914.

⁶²In spite of his name, Talbot was a French Canadian, born in Quebec in 1877. He had come to Manitoba in 1900. Although defeated in 1914, he entered the House in 1915 for an uninterrupted period of 21 years, the last fourteen of which he was Speaker of the Assembly--the longest tenure in Manitoba's history. In his maiden speech, he bolted the Liberal Party and was ultimately responsible for the non-confidence motion which brought down the Norris government in 1922. P.-A. Talbot died in 1967.

⁶³La Liberté, May 5, 1914.

⁶⁴Ibid., April 7, 1914.

that the minority's status in the province was threatened by a change in government, it finally opted for the Conservatives three weeks before the election. The major portion of its editorial reads as follows:

"Je m'en tiendrai au règlement Laurier-Greenway", dit M. Norris. Pour le moment, ignorons que M. Norris a dit à Neepawa, le 7 juillet 1913, "Les conditions ont changé. Si l'on avait pu prévoir ce qui arriverait, les amendements de 1897 n'auraient pas été acceptés."

M. Norris n'ira pas au-delà du règlement Laurier-Greenway. Nous en avons sa parole. Si donc nous avons plus que ce que décrète ce fameux règlement, c'est notre devoir de voter contre ceux qui veulent y revenir. M. Norris reviendra-t-il en deçà du règlement? Ici, encore, son célèbre discours de Neepawa nous fournit la réponse: "Il est probable qu'il sera nécessaire, disait-il, d'amender et de changer la loi actuelle". Et un peu plus loin, dans ce même discours, il concluait à cette nécessité et prenait l'engagement de le faire. "Si cela, déclarait-il, exige une refonte de la loi telle qu'elle est actuellement, ce sera fait."

Et comme M. Norris a déclaré qu'il n'irait pas au-delà du règlement Laurier-Greenway, on doit nécessairement conclure que cette refonte amoindrirait les droits que cette entente nous accorde.

Si la réponse de M. Norris est brutale et peu rassurante, elle est au moins nette. Et le devoir de tout catholique et français n'est plus une énigme. Le simple instinct de conservation vous dit vers qui aller.⁶⁵

In the last week of the campaign, La Liberté was even more categorical:

Votons contre ceux qui veulent amoindrir les droits que nous avons regagnés depuis quelques années, votons contre ceux qui trouvent que nous enseignons trop de français et maintenons trop d'atmosphère catholique dans nos écoles: votons pour ceux dont l'action--intéressé ou désintéressé, peu importe--a favorisé un amoindrissement de l'injustice dont nous souffrons, votons pour ceux qui ont prouvé par leur conduite que le bilinguisme n'est pas un mot vide dans nos écoles.⁶⁶

Le Manitoba, for its part, was still a partisan paper totally committed to the Conservatives. Yet, unlike the two previous elections,

⁶⁵Ibid., June 23, 1914. Ironically, that editorial figured more prominently in Le Manitoba (July 1, 1914) which reproduced it on its front page the following week.

⁶⁶La Liberté, July 7, 1914.

it devoted a considerable amount of space to "minority issues." Once again, the School Question was top electoral fare.

With regard to the School Question, Archbishop Langevin was the oldest and toughest fighter of all. He fired off his first salvo in the form of a circular letter to his clergy more than three months before the election. Part of the text, which Le Manitoba reproduced, follows:

Faut-il déclarer, encore, pour démentir les assertions fausses des politiciens intéressés, que la question des écoles du Manitoba n'est pas encore réglée, et que, s'il y a une amélioration notable dans les centres catholiques, il n'y en a aucune dans les centres mixtes, comme Winnipeg et Brandon, etc., etc., où les catholiques paient le double taxe, comme en 1890, il y a 24 ans !

Vous avez appris les déclarations catégoriques du chef du parti libéral, disant qu'il est en faveur de l'école publique neutre, de l'université d'Etat, qui ferait disparaître les collèges, en particulier celui de Saint-Boniface, et de l'école obligatoire, et il n'est rien moins que favorable aux écoles bilingues ainsi menacées dans leur existence. Nous ne nous attendions guère à une attitude si adverse aux catholiques, et nous la regrettons profondément pour la paix et la justice, autant que pour l'honneur d'un pays d'où le fanatisme semblait banni.

Le devoir de tout catholique intelligent et fier, conscientieux et désintéressé, est tout tracé ! Mais il ne faut pas perdre de vue le redressement de nos griefs, et nous en souvenir à l'occasion.⁶⁷

Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface printed an article along the same lines later during the campaign and it was duly reproduced in the two other French papers.⁶⁸ This was no doubt the Archbishop's most sustained campaign against the Liberals. The "escalation" between His Grace and the Liberal Party had reached its peak. The effect of His Grace's intervention, however, was again hard to judge. The .8% ..

⁶⁷Le Manitoba, March 25, 1914.

⁶⁸La Liberté, April 21, 1914; Le Manitoba, April 29, 1914.

increase in Conservative strength was marginal in the three constituencies. Yet, a series of "marginal" successes added up to a substantial total.

Premier Roblin had consistently courted the French for fourteen years; Langevin had consistently prodded them; the provincial Liberals had consistently seemed menacing. All this had not been without effect, and after a while had succeeded in convincing enough French Catholics to forget their attachment to the French Canadian Leader in Ottawa when marking their provincial ballots. And on July 10, 1914, the day of the closest fought election in Manitoba's history, enough of them had done so to secure the re-election of the Roblin government. Final results gave 28 seats to the Conservatives, and 21 to the Liberals. However, three of those Conservative seats were from the deferred elections in the northern ridings. The first round of voting had given the Conservatives only 25 seats to 21, a majority of four. French Canadians were directly responsible for three of these four (St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Iberville) and their massive Conservative vote in other ridings tipped the scales in at least two others--including Premier Roblin's own riding of Dufferin. There, the Premier's overall majority was 139 while his majority in the three French polls was 141. In Morris, The Conservative's overall majority was 273, but his majority in the French polls was 278. Thus other French areas voted even more heavily Conservative than did St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Carillon.⁶⁹

The French needed only to swing three constituencies the other

⁶⁹See Table 6, pp. 92-93.

T A B L E 6

RESULTS OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE VOTE IN FRENCH
 CANADIAN POLLS IN CONSTITUENCIES OTHER THAN
 THE THREE UNDER STUDY: JULY 10, 1914
 AND AUGUST 6, 1915

	1914		1915	
	LIB.	CONS.	LIB.	CONS.
STE. ROSE CONSTITUENCY	(Campbell)	(Hamelin)	(Rhéaume &McLeod)*	(Hamelin)
Ste. Rose	75	<u>175</u>	95	<u>141</u>
Ste. Amélie	46	<u>67</u>	<u>62</u>	54
Laurier	<u>79</u>	41	<u>82</u>	34
DUFFERIN CONSTITUENCY		(Roblin)		
Fannystelle	19	<u>64</u>	<u>46</u>	43
Haywood	17	<u>53</u>	--	10
St. Claude	60	<u>120</u>	<u>83</u>	29
MANITOU CONSTITUENCY				
La Rivière	58	<u>70</u>	61	<u>67</u>
Cardinal	41	<u>78</u>	<u>115</u>	94
Somerset	81	<u>132</u>	--	--
MORRIS CONSTITUENCY	(Molloy)	(Parent)	(Molloy)	(Parent)
St. Joseph	10	<u>88</u>	15	<u>63</u>
Letellier	27	<u>108</u>	47	<u>78</u>
St. Jean Baptiste	52	<u>131</u>	70	<u>116</u>
Starbuck	59	<u>74</u>	<u>75</u>	53
La Salle	59	<u>82</u>	19	<u>55</u>

TABLE 6--continued

	1914		1915	
	LIB.	CONS.	LIB.	CONS.
MOUNTAIN CONSTITUENCY				
Mariapolis	<u>100</u>	88	<u>124</u>	38
Bruxelles	<u>108</u>	50	<u>114</u>	20
Dunrea	<u>55</u>	31	<u>66</u>	21
IBERVILLE CONSTITUENCY				
St. Francois-Xavier	(Conservative		67	<u>72</u>
Elie	acclamation)		45	<u>134</u>
St. Eustache			48	<u>101</u>
Baie St. Paul			24	<u>45</u>
T O T A L	946	1452	1258	1268

*Combined vote of two Liberals

Source: Manitoba Free Press, July 13, 1914, and August 8, 1915.

way in order to give victory to the Liberals. The three northern frontier districts would probably have returned members of whichever party had won in the rest of the province in order to be in the good graces of the government. The one flaw in the perfect Conservative record of the French was Carillon where T. B. Molloy defeated A. Préfontaine by seven votes out of thirteen hundred. Thus there were still enough Liberal partisans around to produce a victory with the right candidate--a fact deplored by the Archbishop's organ, Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface:

Nous n'avons qu'à déplorer la défaite du candidat Canadien-français et catholique de Carillon sur lequel l'a emporté par une faible majorité un jeune Irlandais catholique, mais appuyant le programme libéral. Dans les autres comtés où l'élément catholique est en proportion notable, il a aussi, règle générale, fait noblement son devoir, mais en étudiant de près le scrutin on ne peut s'empêcher de reconnaître que trop de votes catholiques se sont mêlés aux votes orangistes et ultras-protestants.⁷⁰

By having been full participants in a decade and a half of bitter partisanship, the Franco-Manitobans had inadvertently used this as the vehicle for their reintegration into the mainstream of Manitoba life. They had been part of the same political war indulged in by other Manitobans. The partisan period had divided the French into two camps--but had gained them a voice in both political parties. The French voice in the Liberal Party, however, had rarely, if ever, been listened to. Partly because of this, a successively greater proportion of the French Catholics, especially the clergy, had decided that their participation in the political life of their province and the protection of their minority interests could be best accomplished by supporting the Conservative Party--even though at the federal level the majority of them still tended to support the Liberals.

⁷⁰Reproduced in Le Manitoba, August 19, 1914.

In one respect, the partisan period served the Franco-Manitobans very well. In 1914, the province was evenly divided between the two major parties. The Franco-Manitobans held the balance of power and effectively used it to re-elect the party most sympathetic to their interests. This, however, for reasons entirely beyond their control, amounted only to a stay of execution. By 1914, a reaction against political corruption had already set in among all elements of the population of Manitoba. The French, the English, and the other ethnic groups were all psychologically prepared to swear off party politics altogether once the full extent of political corruption became known.

Within a year of the 1914 election, the party to whom the French had tied their destiny collapsed completely. The Franco-Manitobans later attributed the Roblin defeat of 1915 and the Thornton law of 1916 to political partisanship and their reaction against it lasted for decades. Yet, in retrospect, it can be seen that they used their ballots in the most effective way possible during the partisan period. They gave their support to the party which gave them the maximum degree of protection while usually maintaining a voice in the opposition--just in case. If the Liberal Party had been "antagonized," it was less by the French electorate than by the French clergy. But even so, it remains conjectural whether greater discretion on the part of Langevin would have resulted in a more sympathetic attitude from the Liberals. A more pertinent question is whether Langevin's interference was at all necessary to produce the gradual shifting of support for the Conservatives. In any event, the decade and a half of political activity that ended in 1914 was shortly followed by the most traumatic period of all for the French minority.

CHAPTER V

THE TURNING POINT

The government which the French had "saved" did not survive the first session of the new legislature. The people of Manitoba had needed only a "last straw" to destroy their tolerance of the Old Politics; the Legislative Building Scandal was it.¹ Disclosures of graft and corruption surrounding the construction of the new Legislative building implicated all levels of the Conservative Party up to and including Premier Roblin. The first of a number of commissions of inquiry had sat barely two weeks before their findings forced the government to resign. On May 13, 1915, the leader of the Liberal Party, T. C. Norris, became Premier of Manitoba. In opposition, the Liberals had been deprived of the numerous opportunities for graft and thereby escaped most of the opprobrium falling on the Old Politics. They had not been without fault--they had merely been without power.

In 1914, the Liberal Party had largely succeeded in identifying itself as a "reform" party. It had attracted the support of a number of non-partisan reform groups. The way it came to power was almost a vindication of its election campaign the previous year. Yet, that campaign had been a very partisan one and, in the words of Professor Morton, "the Norris government, though formally a party government, was

¹For an account, see Morton, op. cit., pp. 341-45.

required by the circumstances in which it came to office to transcend its origins and become a non-partisan administration."² After a few weeks in office, Norris, with a minority of supporters in the Assembly, called a new election and fought it on the platform of 1914. However, "the campaign was necessarily a plebiscite on the record of the Roblin government and the result was foregone."³ Nevertheless, the Conservative Party did not take everything lying down. To gain a "new image," it held a convention, threw out the old guard, elected Sir James Aikins as its new leader, and adopted a "reform" program of its own which advocated, among other things, the repeal of the Coldwell amendments. But, it was too much to ask of the electorate to believe in such an instant rebirth. The Conservatives who made the news were still those who, mere weeks before, had been cabinet ministers and who were under investigation by a royal commission during the length of the election campaign.

The 1915 election put the French in Manitoba in a very uncomfortable position: they had to choose between a party which was tarred with corruption and one which posed a serious threat to their way of life. For this and other reasons, the contest in the French centres was less one-sided than in the rest of the province, and the overall results turned out to be misleading. Norris won a landslide victory, and the Conservatives were reduced to five members--four of whom were French. This has led many observers, including Professor Morton,⁴ to conclude that the French had supported the Conservatives. This was not the case, however, and although far from being unanimous, the majority of Franco-Manitobans turned, for the third time, toward the Liberal

²Ibid., page 347.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., page 348.

Party. That the majority of French-speaking elected members were Conservatives was accidental, and did not reflect the way the French electorate voted.

Campaign coverage in the two French weeklies reflected the embarrassment of the minority. Neither could bring itself to support the party associated with corruption or the party associated with francophobia or anti-catholicism. Le Manitoba's dilemma was somewhat greater since it was a partisan paper associated with the Conservatives and its editor was the brother of Joseph Bernier, a cabinet minister in the Roblin administration. Bernier, however, resigned from the Conservative Party in protest, not against the behaviour of his colleagues over the Legislative building, but over the Conservative convention's decision to advocate the repeal of the Coldwell amendments of which he had been an architect. According to Bernier, Roblin had always been "l'ami des catholiques" and, with him gone, the party had taken a turn for the worse.⁵

Le Manitoba carried a long editorial⁶ on the Conservative convention, coupling praises of the new leader with condemnations of some aspects of the new platform. The following week, Le Manitoba made a mild endorsement of the Conservative candidate in St. Boniface, while hinting that it was doing so only because he was a personal friend of the editor.⁷ In its pre-election issue (August 4), Le Manitoba printed not a word on the election. It was in the same impossible situation as in 1888. La Liberté found the going somewhat easier since, after all, it was avowedly neutral. In an editorial entitled "Comment voter,"⁸

⁵Le Manitoba, July 28, 1915.

⁶Ibid., July 21, 1915.

⁷Ibid., July 28, 1915.

⁸La Liberté, July 20, 1915.

it maintained neutrality by heaping scorn equally on both parties. Lest this be taken as a call to boycott the election, it concluded by asking its readers, in effect, to vote for the least corrupt individual in their riding.

The results in the French areas seem to indicate that a "vote for the man" approach was generally followed, although with a marked trend toward the Liberals. In the three constituencies under study, two seats changed from Conservative to Liberal and one from Liberal to Conservative. The trend toward the Liberals was greatest in St. Boniface where the Liberal candidate (J. P. Dumas) won in spite of the fact that an English-speaking Independent Liberal siphoned away the majority of the Liberal vote in Norwood (the English quarter of the city). The Conservative vote in the constituency went down from 56% in 1914 to 34% in 1915.⁹

A similar trend toward the Liberals could be seen in La Vérendrye where the same two candidates were running as in the previous election. Where the Conservative J.-B. Lauzon had previously won with 59% of the vote, the Liberal P.-A. Talbot was now the winner with 56%.¹⁰ This election marked a turning point of sorts for the constituency and for the two men. For Lauzon, this was his fifth and final defeat after eight elections; for Talbot, it marked the beginning of a long and distinguished career in the Manitoba legislature.

In the sister constituency of Carillon, which also saw the same candidates in the field as in the previous election, no similar trend could be observed. The popular vote was virtually the same in both

⁹Calculated from the figures in Appendix A.

¹⁰Ibid.

elections, a seven vote majority for the Liberal (Molloy) being transformed into a 24 vote majority for the Conservative (Préfontaine). This was quite a feat when we consider that Carillon was the only constituency in the province to switch from Liberal to Conservative. Personal loyalty to Mr. Préfontaine, as reflected in the eight other general elections in which he took part, was probably responsible for his maintaining his solid block of support. Thus, in the three constituencies under study, the Liberal vote went up from 44.9% in 1914 to 59.3% in 1915.

In other constituencies where the French, although in the minority, constituted a substantial proportion of the total vote, there were elected three of the four French-speaking members. In Ste. Rose, the Conservative, with only 39% of the vote and majorities in only two out of seventeen polls, took the seat by virtue of the fact that an "Independent Liberal" siphoned enough votes away from the official party candidate. Aimé Bénard's Conservative victory in Iberville is without doubt attributable to his personal popularity. In 1910, he had obtained the largest majority in the province and, in 1914, in the most partisan of elections, he had been the only member returned by acclamation. In 1915, his margin was 549 to 416.¹¹ The situation was similar in Morris, the fourth constituency to elect a French Conservative. In the last two cases, the fact that the Liberal candidate was English-speaking certainly played a part in determining the French vote.

The constituencies of Manitou and Dufferin also had French-speaking areas which changed Conservative majorities into Liberal ones.¹²

¹¹Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1916.

¹²See Table 6, pp. 92-93.

In spite of the fact that four out of five of the Conservative opposition members were French, the majority of Franco-Manitobans had voted Liberal.

There were a number of parallels between the elections of 1888 and 1915. In both years, the Conservative government with which the Franco-Manitobans identified was involved in a scandal. In both cases, the opposition Liberal Party acceded to power without a general election. In both cases, the results of the general election which followed were foregone. In both cases, the Franco-Manitobans joined the trend toward the new administration partly on the strength of promises, implied or expressed, that their rights would be safeguarded. In both cases, the minority found itself betrayed by the party it had turned to in the interest of better government. The Greenway government waited until the second session after its election before it proceeded to abolish the dual school system. The Norris government was more impatient; it abolished the bilingual system during its first session in 1916.

Admittedly, the bilingual system had need of reform. The Norris government chose to burn the house down to get rid of the termites. On January 12, 1916, the Minister of Education, R. S. Thornton, introduced "an Act to Further Amend the Public Schools Act"¹³ which was the repeal of the bilingual clause of the Laurier-Greenway compromise. This, in spite of repeated promises that French would not be touched. In fact, such promises were even made after the legislation was introduced. Referring to a meeting between Norris and P.-A. Talbot and H. Chevrier, the Winnipeg Telegram reported:

¹³Statutes of Manitoba, 1916-1917, Chapter 88.

Premier Norris is said to have definitely proposed that the French-Canadian people will not be interfered with in the proposed anti-bilingual legislation, and that the Laurier-Greenway settlement will not be abrogated.¹⁴

The Bill nevertheless passed on March 10, 1916, with no special provision regarding the French language. The sense of betrayal among the Franco-Manitobans was extreme. They had felt let down, along with many other Manitobans who had supported the Conservative Party, when the Legislative Building Scandal came to light. This sense of frustration was heightened when the Liberal Party turned on them within a matter of months and tried to legislate their language away. The reaction to the Schools Act of 1916 was immediate and widespread among the French. The two Liberal members of the Legislature crossed the floor and P.-A. Talbot, in his maiden speech, condemned the government in whose support he had been elected. Of more important and lasting significance, however, was a meeting at St. Boniface College on February 25, 1916. From all parts of the province, 1500 Franco-Manitobans gathered to plot a course of action in face of the imminent Thornton law.¹⁵ From this meeting emerged a "comité de vigilance" which, the following June, transformed itself into l'Association d'Education des Canadiens-Français du Manitoba, whose founding was the most important single milestone in the history of the French Catholics in Manitoba.

From this founding meeting, a consensus emerged: that the minority, after twenty-five years of experience, had no allies, whether within or without the political parties; that if the French fact was to survive in Manitoba, it would depend entirely on the resources of the

¹⁴The Winnipeg Telegram, February 10, 1916.

¹⁵La Liberté, February 29, 1916.

Franco-Manitobans themselves, within or without the law; and that the minority, in order to survive, could no longer afford the luxury of dissent, especially partisan dissent. From one day to the next, Franco-Manitoban politicians lost their place of leadership in the community to the "new order," l'Association. Yet they were among the first to cheer. Joseph Bernier's speech was typical of the mood of the February meeting:

Après avoir résumé les événements de 1890, l'orateur insiste sur la gravité de la situation actuelle. Il ne se gêne pas pour dénoncer les maux que nous a causé l'esprit de parti et confesse que comme bon nombre d'autres il doit se frapper la poitrine. Une union franche et loyale de tous nous assurera le triomphe.¹⁶

The slogan of l'Association would soon become "Si nous voulons du français, c'est à nous d'en mettre"; this would be repeated endlessly for decades. It expressed both the hopelessness of the situation and the determination of the minority. The stated purpose of the A.E.C.F.M. was to redress the injustice done to the minority. Yet, its very founding and its slogan were acknowledgements that redress would not come (... c'est à nous ...).

There was militancy in the air in 1916, from the Archbishop down to the anonymous letter-to-the-editor-writer. On the morrow of the February 25 meeting, an anonymous letter was written to La Liberté, expressing the feelings of the delegates. Commenting on the Conservative Party's "hands off" attitude toward the School Question, the correspondent wrote:

Les conservateurs ont eu leur heure de bien faire, ils ont jugé qu'une attitude passive à notre endroit était la meilleure. Eh! bien, tant pis pour eux. L'heure actuelle est à l'activité, à la lutte, continuelle, par tous les moyens, pour le droit et la justice, jusqu'à ce que nous ayons eu

¹⁶La Liberté, February 29, 1916.

notre bataille de la Marne, et notre victoire. Ne croyons plus aux Anglais, ne croyons plus à la politique; imitons nos frères de France. En avant tous, aux tranchées, et prenons garde aux espions et aux séducteurs! ¹⁷

St. Boniface had a new Archbishop (Langevin had died in 1915) and his first speech in that capacity was worthy of Langevin:

Ces lois sont donc manifestement injustes, et une loi injuste n'est pas une loi, car il y aurait contradiction dans les termes.

.
Nous ne ferons jamais de politique au sens étroit du mot; mais nous ne sommes pas de ceux qu'on peut facilement épouvanter en leur criant qu'ils font de la politique.¹⁸

Archbishop Béliveau did not have Langevin's trouble in keeping the French united; the Norris government had done that for him.

From the day of the founding of the Association, the tactics employed by the Franco-Manitobans on matters of concern to them as a group were not decided by politicians, or even by the clergy unilaterally, but by the Association, and any divergence from the mots d'ordre were not tolerated. Yet the founding of the Association did not mean a loss of power for the clergy, quite the contrary. The Archbishop's power within the A.E.C.F.M. was considerable, and the existence of that body gave him the perfect vehicle for exercising his authority on lay matters.

A few months after its founding, l'Association put its foot down concerning independent action by individual members, including by definition any French-speaking Manitoban. J. P. Dumas, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for St. Boniface, undertook legal action to have French recognized in the Manitoba courts. Instead of backing Dumas, l'Association condemned his action as a plot to divided French-

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Quoted in ibid., June 7, 1916.

Canadians.¹⁹ The A.E.C.F.M.'s action regarding Dumas was also indicative of its belief that judicial recourse was useless as a possible avenue of redress for the minority.

The passing of the Thornton law and the founding of the A.E.C.F.M. meant two things as far as the voting behaviour of the Franco-Manitobans was concerned: on the one hand, it was realized that no change would be brought about in the law as a result of how Franco-Manitobans voted --thus the survival of the minority would cease to be a prominent consideration in the elections. On the other hand, the task of mettre du français would devolve on the A.E.C.F.M.. The "front line of defense" was now l'Association; the chief combattants for la cause were now the members elected to the executive of l'Association, not those elected to sit in the new Legislative building on Broadway Avenue.

The years between the provincial elections of 1915 and 1920 were turbulent ones both for the minority and for the province as a whole. Conscription did nothing to improve relations between the races. In fact, the war may have been partly responsible for the Thornton law: to use French (and even more so, German) in the schools was considered by some to be unpatriotic, patriotism being synonymous with being "British." When the war ended, it did not bring peace; it brought depression and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Understandably, the government was not anxious to rush into an election, although in the circumstances, and with the exception of the Thornton law, it did not have a bad record. The election was called at the very end of the government's five-year mandate. As it had feared, farmers suffering under a depression, workers angry at the government's handling of the

¹⁹Ibid., June 21, 1916.

strike and the French and ethnic communities angry at the Thornton law combined to deny the Norris government a majority. It retained 21 out of 55 seats, the rest going to the farmers (12), the Labour Party (11 --four of whom were in jail), the Conservatives (7) and Independents (4).

For the French, this had been the first election after the Thornton law, and one might have expected another "School Question election" like that of 1892. The School Question was a prime consideration, of course, but it did not have the impact of the earlier years. First of all, it was fully realized that there was virtually no chance of having the law changed, contrary to 1892. Secondly, the French had lived under the Thornton law for four years already and had worked out the modus vivendi which was to serve them in good stead for the next few decades.

The founders of l'Association, being convinced that no legal redress could come in the foreseeable future, had immediately begun tacit arrangements at the local level with officials of the Department of Education for the continued use of French as a teaching language in their schools. The French community had had good working relationships with officials of the Department of Education since the beginning of the Roblin regime and this did not change overnight because of a new law. In fact, the government, having asserted the province's "British" character, evidently did not object to this continuing relationship.

Thus, French continued to be used in many schools of Manitoba, on a more restricted basis and always under a cloud--but still used. There were inevitable conflicts and French school children suffered in districts where there was not a sufficient homogeneity to arrive at a

local modus vivendi.²⁰ But the arrangement existing in 1920 was generally accepted as the best that could be obtained under the circumstances.

The Norris government derived little political advantage from tolerating the "arrangement," however, in contrast with the way that Premier Roblin had benefited from his lenient administration of the Schools Act. For, in 1921 there were no promises--or threats--from any direction to change the status quo. Nor had Premier Roblin been responsible for the law as it stood during his tenure (in fact, he had originally voted against it) whereas Norris definitely was. Norris was in an analogous position to one who has driven a ten-inch blade into someone's back: he could not expect gratitude for withdrawing it some five inches. French support for Norris Liberals understandably dwindled to almost nothing. No Liberal candidates could be found in either La Vérendrye or Carillon. In St. Boniface, J. P. Dumas, the incumbent who had crossed the floor with P.-A. Talbot in 1916 and had come round to calling himself a Liberal again by 1920, came in a poor third with 17% of the vote. But, there was no open hostility or "declaration of war" on the government by the French press. This was no doubt due to the fear that if the government were returned after having been violently attacked by the French group, the new modus vivendi might be seriously endangered. Because of its huge majority in the House and the disorganization and disunity of the opposition, many feared that the government would be returned with a majority. Only at the next election two years later, when it was obvious that they were on their way out, did La Liberté dare to condemn the Liberals.

²⁰For a full account of the application of the Manitoba Schools Act (1916), see Paul-Emile Leblanc, "L'enseignement français en Manitoba, 1916-68" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1969).

In 1920, however, La Liberté took an officially neutral, or rather anti-party, stance:

Il y a beau temps que le sort des partis politiques nous laisse indifférents, à La Liberté; nous n'existons pas pour faire de la politique de partis. Il nous semble que ceux des nôtres qui croient encore au parti politique comme à l'évangile, feraient bien de reconnaître leur credo politique; il sonne creux.²¹

A few weeks before the election, La Liberté put Manitoba politics in perspective for the French minority:

Sans faire fi de la politique, nous n'hésitons pas à affirmer que là n'est point le salut pour nous. C'est dans l'Association d'Education, dans cette cohésion de nos forces sur le terrain de la défense et de l'action ... qu'est le salut.²²

As if to underscore that point, l'Association held its bi-annual convention a week before voting day. Still, provincial elections were very important, and La Liberté would counsel: "En l'absence de programmes, votons pour les candidats que nous croyons plus aptes à servir les causes qui nous sont chères."²³

Anti-party feeling was so strong among French voters, however, that they refused to support any candidates with party labels. Instead, they would vote for independent candidates and farmers, of the organized or unorganized variety. This was the undoing, in 1920 at least, of Albert Préfontaine. During the five years of the Norris administration, he had been leader of the five-man Official Opposition, which was the Conservative Party. Thus, in 1920, he was very much identified with that party, and his much publicised²⁴ participation at the Conservative convention probably furthered this identification. Préfontaine was

²¹La Liberté, April 20, 1920.

²²Ibid., June 1, 1920.

²³Ibid., June 22, 1920.

²⁴Cf., Winnipeg Free Press, April 15, 1920; Le Manitoba, April 21 and May 5, 1920, and La Liberté, April 20 and 27, 1920.

defeated in Carillon by a farmer by a margin of 47 votes. That this defeat was due entirely to his continued association with the Conservative Party appears evident from the result in 1922 when he abandoned the Conservative label, gained the nomination for the United Farmers of Manitoba, and thereupon won by a landslide, against the same opponent!

The trend toward independent candidates could also be seen in La Vérendrye, where a farmer challenged Talbot. During his five years in opposition, however, Talbot had solidly established himself as an independent and popular member. He won handily, and the next time round, like Préfontaine, he also secured for himself the U.F.M. nomination.

In St. Boniface, the "swing" to the independents was also pronounced and even took a comical turn in the founding of a new "constitutional, middle-class, independent party." His brother's newspaper gives the following account of Joseph Bernier's nomination which, if suspect, nevertheless typified prevailing attitudes:

Samedi dernier, dans les salles de l'école Provencher se tenait une réunion importante composée de représentants des anciens groupes libéraux et conservateurs du comté de Saint-Boniface.

.
En face de la situation actuelle du monde politique manitobain tous reconnaissent qu'il fallait une candidature nettement indépendante des partis politiques existants; qu'il fallait un porte drapeau autour duquel on pourrait rallier les individus et les groupes.

Plusieurs noms furent proposés et finalement la candidature fut offerte à M. Joseph Bernier qui depuis quelques années a carrément pris au Manitoba une attitude indépendante des partis politiques.

M. Bernier est donc aujourd'hui le candidat officiel du parti indépendant de Saint-Boniface.²⁵

But, there were no fewer than four independent candidates and in his desire to become the "official" independent, Bernier elevated his candidacy to the status of a one-man political party. Anti-party feeling

²⁵Le Manitoba, June 16, 1920.

had come full circle !

As the campaign wore on, Bernier even published a "manifesto." In fact, he published it five times, twice after the election.²⁶ Bernier could not decide what to call his party, but he was sure it would sweep the country:

Qu'on le nomme parti constitutionnel, parti bourgeois, parti indépendant tout simplement, ou qu'on lui donne le nom que l'on voudra, c'est le seul parti politique qui sera appelé à conduire les destinées du pays ...²⁷

This may have amused the electorate of St. Boniface, but Bernier won the seat probably because of his well-earned reputation for integrity and the fact that he was the only independent candidate who was French. The English-speaking vote was split three ways, and the other French-Canadian, Dumas, eliminated himself by running as a Liberal.

The minority Liberal government elected in 1920 did not quite last two years. Some attempts had been made to defeat it in the interval, but the first time such an attempt succeeded, it was led by Philippe-Adjutor Talbot. It was his non-confidence motion that defeated the Norris government in March 1922. The French in Manitoba had had some satisfaction in denying Norris a majority in 1920; now they had fully extracted their pound of flesh. *La Liberté* was hard put to conceal its satisfaction:

Tous ceux qui ont observé avec soin les événements qui se sont déroulés depuis deux ans dans l'arène provinciale admettront avec nous que le gouvernement Norris quitte aujourd'hui le pouvoir parce qu'il a fait ostraciser la langue française.²⁸

In many respects, the 1922 election was, for the French, a repetition, or rather a consolidation, of the decision taken two years earlier.

²⁶Ibid., April 21, 1920 and ff.

²⁷Ibid., June 30, 1920.

²⁸La Liberté, April 4, 1922.

For the rest of the province, it was different: a revolution had occurred. Farmers' discontent had first become manifest in 1920 when eleven independent farmers were elected to the legislature. In 1922, they had the rudiments of an organization, but in no sense could they be called a political party. Running candidates with the intention of becoming a powerful pressure group, they suddenly found themselves in power with 28 seats--and without a leader! Among them were P.-A. Talbot and A. Préfontaine. The French Canadians were once again, seemingly, "in the mainstream."

In the two years since the previous election, there had been a further consolidation of what might be called "creeping unanimity." La Liberté no longer even saw a need for elections in the French constituencies:

Dans notre humble opinion, il ne devrait pas y avoir plus d'une candidature française dans chacun de nos comtés français. Naturellement entendons-nous au préalable sur le choix de nos candidats: plaçons en nomination de bons patriotes, sans trop nous occuper s'ils appartenaient autrefois aux anciens partis rouge ou bleu. Le seul point à considérer devrait être celui-ci: que le caractère et le passé de ces candidats nous soient garants de leur fidélité à défendre la langue française; que leur talent nous soit une assurance que leur bataille vaudra quelque chose. C'est dire que le choix de chaque candidat français devrait s'inspirer d'une pensée unique, mais devrait aussi s'inspirer des circonstances locales. L'important pour nous est d'arriver à la législature avec un groupe français homogène et compact.

.....
 ... si nous pouvions arriver, une bonne fois, à frapper tous ensemble sur le même clou, vous verrez quel fameux coup de marteau ça ferait.²⁹

When one L. P. Roy had the temerity to challenge P.-A. Talbot as a Liberal candidate, La Liberté called him an orangeman (the worst epithet printable by a Catholic newspaper at the time) and suggested

²⁹Ibid.

he was a traitor to his race by challenging a man:

dont le passé politique est sans tache et qui a toujours su, aux heures de crise, accomplir fièrement et noblement son devoir, qui entre sa race et son parti a choisi sa race et la défense de ses droits.³⁰

Both Talbot and Préfontaine obtained the endorsement of the United Farmers of Manitoba and both won handily. The pattern was thus set for the next half-century and neither of the two sister constituencies would ever change hands again. Although the circumstances were different, a similar orientation could be seen in St. Boniface. There were no farmer candidates, and Joseph Bernier ran as an independent against Liberal and Laborite English-speaking opponents. The French vote went overwhelmingly in favour of Bernier. Partly because St. Boniface was an urban constituency and the government was made up of farmers, and partly because of the racial divisions within the constituency, St. Boniface did not rally immediately to the government side as did La Vérendrye and Carillon.

This, however, did not indicate any division within the French community as to the tactics to be used with regard to their minority rights. Quite the contrary, it indicated that the battle for their minority rights had been taken away from the political arena and had been made the exclusive concern of the A.E.C.F.M. In provincial elections, the French Canadians of Manitoba would henceforth vote as farmers or as taxpayers rather than as an aggrieved minority. Not that the role their elected representatives played was unimportant in the context of the fight for minority rights; theirs was a key role in the strategy of the A.E.C.F.M.: to serve as vigilantes of the government process,

³⁰Ibid., July 11, 1922.

ensuring through their contacts with government officials, that the modus vivendi worked smoothly. In that capacity, they were all French Canadians, irrespective of politics, and they had to answer to the A.E.C.F.M. rather than to their constituents on matters concerning minority rights.

For nearly half a century, the status of the French Catholic minority had been determined in the political arena. After 1916, the French concluded that this political involvement had served them poorly. The great turning point had been reached.

CHAPTER VI

THE LONG SLEEP: THE "NON-POLITICAL YEARS"

At the beginning of the fifteenth legislature of Manitoba, Philippe-Adjutor Talbot crossed the floor and denounced his party. At the beginning of the seventeenth legislature of Manitoba, he ascended to the throne of the Speaker of the Assembly. This change was symbolic of the change which had come over the French minority as well as the complete transformation which had occurred in the political life of Manitoba. Party loyalties had been virtually done away with; even cabinet solidarity had become a thing of the past. The farmers had come to power as a "movement," the members of which were responsible, not to a legislature or a government (which they had to form because of their majority in the legislature), but to their constituents from whom they claimed to derive their authority. Issues became "open" to the House and cabinet members voting against government measures no longer became cause for scandal. In this connection, Professor Morton states that "whether a government, following the new procedure, could be defeated in the legislature, was a question, perhaps a purely theoretical one."¹

In 1922, Albert Préfontaine entered the cabinet as Provincial Secretary, with none of the controversy which surrounded Joseph Bernier's entry into the cabinet ten years previously. This, in spite of the fact

¹Morton, op. cit., page 385.

that the laws which the French had to live under were much harsher than they had been then. Cabinet solidarity having now disappeared, entering the cabinet no longer meant acquiescing in all government measures--the French members could now fully participate in the political life of the province without sacrificing their principles on questions of minority rights. This would be challenged in 1945 and 1949, but, in 1922, there was general acceptance that the minority was in no way jeopardizing itself by co-operating, in the government of the province, with the "majority" which had so recently deprived it of what it considered an inalienable right.

It was no coincidence that the French could make use of a political climate favorable to them because, along with other minority groups, they had played a large part in creating this climate. They had denied the Norris government a majority in 1920, had engendered its downfall in 1922, and "even the farmers' entry into politics was to a considerable degree a cloak for opposition to the school legislation of 1916."²

The government which had come to power in Manitoba in 1922, with John Bracken as Premier, was re-elected in one form or another until 1958. There would be changes in its composition, changes in the "party" affiliation of its members; it would have strong opposition, weak opposition, no opposition. But, because "depolitisation" and lack of party discipline was the very essence of the "new order," there was not much threat to its existence in the changing political winds in the nation as a whole. As long as the people of Manitoba remembered the scandals and partisanship of the Roblin era, as long as the French

²Ibid., page 375.

and other ethnic groups remembered the Thornton law, as long as there was a depression, or a war, or a "reconstruction," as long as there was any excuse to maintain what started as a "revolution," but soon became the most established of orders, there would be no return to "politics." Instead, there would be the dullest three decades in the political history of Manitoba.

The French would be fully a part of the "new order" of politics during the non-political years. They had been among the first to "swear off" party politics; they had been at the forefront in creating the "new politics"; their social and cultural values were much more attuned to prevailing attitudes than they had ever been. They were in large part farmers, or at least "rural minded," and the government of Manitoba was one of farmers. As a vulnerable minority, they had long sought unity--a unity which political partisanship had seemed to deny them. Now, the partisanship was gone and unity was formed under the Association. Not only had they achieved unity, but they also achieved security which, ironically, was the result of the extremely harsh laws they had to live under. Since virtually all their cultural rights had been stripped away, they had no fear of further attacks on them. Only the rich have a fear of thieves. And since they had no hope of redress, they could concentrate on making the best of a bad situation. This "best" was tolerable since they were given what amounted to a free hand in running their schools outside the letter of the law. Once again, the French had developed a vested interest in the status quo--only this time, it was much more stable than had been the case at the time of the Norquay and Roblin administrations. The Catholic tradition of the Franco-Manitobans did not lead them to lament the demise of a political

opposition when a coalition government was formed; rather, it led them to approve the decline of contested democratic elections resulting from coalition. In 1941, commenting on the fact that sixteen members of the Legislative Assembly were returned by acclamation, La Liberté claimed:

C'est un beau spectacle--et qui mérite d'être souligné--de voir une province du Canada accomplir sans bruit un tel acte de renoncement démocratique.³

If the years between 1922 and 1952 were somewhat politically sterile, they were even more electorally sterile. The voters of La Vérendrye and Carillon kept on re-electing popular incumbents and their successors with monotonous regularity. Because St. Boniface constituency was greatly enlarged, during the non-political years, making it a predominantly English-speaking riding, the overall results were not always an indication of the way the French voted, and the way the French voted was not always an indication of how the minority felt on issues. Nevertheless, the French in St. Boniface generally favoured the government. There were seven general elections and one by-election during those years. Thus, there were twenty-two different possibilities of having a "contest." While only one of these was decided by an acclamation, the results in the majority of the others were foregone conclusions. When there was a contest, the issues debated were of little or no consequence to the minority. A prime example was the Carillon by-election in 1935, called to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Albert Préfontaine. In one of the liveliest contests of the period⁴

³La Liberté, April 2, 1941.

⁴The Liberal-Progressive nominating convention for this election probably constituted the only time in the province's, if not the country's history where the voting "delegates" constituted more than half of those who cast ballots in the general election. The following

two government supporters fought the campaign exclusively on the "issue" of whether the constituency should be represented by a "local boy," Edmond Préfontaine (the son of the deceased member), or by an "outsider from St. Boniface (the "local boy" won).

The paucity of meaningful contests during the non-political years was, in one respect, equally as enlightening as if issues had been fully debated and voted on. It indicated a general acceptance of the attitudes taken by the elected members, attitudes best expressed in the following excerpt from a 1953 advertisement by Edmond Préfontaine, then in the cabinet. The following also says much on the A.E.C.F.M.'s and the clergy's leadership on matters of direct concern to the minority:

Si je défends le système scolaire en cette province, je ne voudrais pas donner l'impression, qu'à mon avis, tout est bien dans le meilleur des mondes en matière d'éducation au Manitoba. Non, je n'approuve pas les vieilles lois scolaires mais toujours opérantes qui sont dans les Statuts de cette province depuis 1890 et 1916, et je puis vous assurer que lorsque l'Association d'Education et nos évêques nous diront que le temps est venu d'attaquer de front cette législation, ils auront mon appui tout entier. Mais en attendant, en tenant

footnote to Manitoba's political history is taken from the Carillon News, a Steinbach weekly, of May 30, 1958:

"Carillon's Biggest Fight

That was when bedlam really broke loose in Carillon. Never before or since had the constituency witnessed a nominating convention like the one the Liberals held that year. There were three candidates for nomination: J. J. Reimer of Steinbach, Louis-Philippe Gagnon of St. Boniface and Ed. Préfontaine. Excitement ran at fever pitch. Over 2,000 delegates flooded into St. Pierre for the nomination. The beer parlor was overflowing with loud-mouthed arguing partisans from all factions. Fights broke out on every hand. When the count was taken, J. J. Reimer had 350, Gagnon 700, and Préfontaine, 1000. With Reimer eliminated, another vote had to be called. This time Gagnon won by 60 votes. On the surface, that seemed to settle it. But two days later, 400 men invaded Préfontaine's yard and asked him to run against Gagnon in the election. Préfontaine consented and on election day emerged from the red hot contest with a win of 160 votes."

compte de notre situation, je crois que nous pouvons espérer du groupe d'hommes qui gouvernent à l'heure actuelle, autant de tolérance, sinon plus, que n'importe quel parti oppositionniste et des hommes qui les composent.⁵

There were, of course, exceptions to these attitudes, and harmony did not always prevail during the three "non-political" decades, starting with the 1927 general election.

This election was held in a climate of rising prosperity. There was no reason to disassociate this prosperity from the new order of politics and the Progressive government was returned. However, a revived Conservative Party with fifteen members elected was in a position to give it a much stronger opposition. The group included Joseph Bernier of St. Boniface, who returned to the party twelve years after the Legislative Building Scandal. Albert Préfontaine, now minister of Agriculture, won the biggest victory of his career with 78% of the vote in Carillon, and P.-A. Talbot repeated his 1922 triumph in La Vérendrye. Five years later, both of the latter were again re-elected, but as Liberal-Progressives. This alteration in the Farmers' government had been the direct result of happenings of the federal scene where Mackenzie King's Liberal Party had absorbed the federal Progressives. A union of Progressive and Liberal forces at the provincial level might have occurred in 1927, a year after the federal union, had the scars of 1916 been fully healed. But they had not been. The passage of time, the federal alliance, and the strong Conservative opposition of the late 1920's, however, served to bring the Manitoba Progressives and Liberals closer together. The added impetus--or excuse--of the depression served to crystallize the union. A coalition was proclaimed in

⁵La Liberté et le Patriote, May 29, 1953.

1931 to which the Conservative Party was also invited to adhere. Its refusal appeared exclusively partisan in a time of troubles, and the following year it obtained only ten seats to the Liberal-Progressives' thirty-eight. In that election, St. Boniface elected its first English-speaking member who turned out to be, of all things, of the Labour Party. This was the second of the multi-racial, multi-party fights in the constituency.

By 1936, the Manitoba government, like most governments of the day, encountered the desperation of a people not knowing where to turn and who, in their search for solutions, elected members from the whole political spectrum, including a Communist. Only a post-election alliance with the five newly elected Social Credit members kept the government from defeat. Most French voters did not waver, however, in their support of the government. Carillon returned Edmond Préfontaine who had won his right of succession in the previous year's by-election while, in La Vérendrye, Sauveur Marcoux usurped, rather than inherited, his place on the government benches by defeating P.-A. Talbot by one vote at the nominating convention.⁶

There followed a personal rivalry between Préfontaine and Marcoux which was to be transformed in the late forties into a serious questioning of the role of the "French representatives" in the coalition. In 1931, Albert Préfontaine, Minister of Agriculture, had been "demoted" to Minister without Portfolio to make way for the Liberals

⁶According to Edmond Préfontaine, this was the result of Talbot's having "rested on his laurels" as a héros national and Speaker of the House, and having neglected his constituency. On the other hand, Marcoux "avait bien organisé la convention." (Notes from an interview with Mr. Préfontaine, August, 1967.)

entering the Coalition government. The consequent loss of minister's salary imposed a heavy financial burden on Préfontaine because he had to attend regular cabinet meetings while tending to his farm thirty miles south of the city, and transportation was somewhat of a problem between St. Pierre and Winnipeg. After the election of 1936, Premier Bracken offered the same type of arrangement to Edmond Préfontaine. Edmond insisted on a portfolio and a salary, but Bracken would not give in. Instead, much to Préfontaine's consternation, he offered the "job" to Marcoux.⁷

⁷Préfontaine's reasons for turning down the cabinet post were not made known until 1949 when, in the heat of the coalition-anti-coalition battle, he explained them during a radio talk:

"Si monsieur Marcoux a été nommé ministre sans portefeuille c'est qu'il s'est contenté des miettes que j'avais refusées. Monsieur Bracken était à réorganiser son cabinet. Il me fit venir à sa résidence privée et m'offrit la position de ministre sans portefeuille. Il me fit comprendre que cette position n'était pas strictement nécessaire et que je ne serais pas payé. Il nommait cependant, trois autres ministres tous avec portefeuilles et plein salaire. Il offrait aux Canadiens-français et aux catholiques une position inférieure ... non payée! Je lui dis que nous méritions mieux, que je me croyais aussi qualifié que les autres pour administrer un portefeuille, que s'il croyait, sans parti pris que je ne l'étais pas ou que je n'avais pas assez d'expérience que j'étais prêt à attendre, que j'étais père de famille, sans argent et que je ne pouvais venir siéger au conseil des ministres à grands sacrifices d'argent. Monsieur Bracken insista et finit par me dire qu'il ne pouvait me payer ouvertement mais qu'il me paierait "somehow". Ma fierté se révolta. Je lui dis merci. Je ne voulais pas être payé "somehow" et devenir ainsi la chose du gouvernement. Je retournai chez-moi à St-Pierre. Le lendemain matin, monsieur Bracken me téléphona longue distance pour me demander si j'avais changé d'idée. Je lui dis que non. Il me dit qu'il offrait la position à monsieur Marcoux. Je lui demandai si les conditions seraient toujours les mêmes. Il me répondit que oui. Je lui dis alors ceci: Dites à monsieur Marcoux que vous m'avez offert la position et que j'ai refusé car moi je le dirai. Monsieur Bracken m'a promis qu'il avertirait monsieur Marcoux. Ce dernier accepta cette position d'infériorité. Il accepta de n'être pas payé du tout ou d'être payé à la cachette."

(Text of speech from Mr. E. Préfontaine's private papers.)

In 1936, the constituency of St. Boniface again produced baffling results complicated by the preferential voting system in operation from 1924 to 1955.⁸ The system did not significantly affect Carillon where there were never more than two candidates, or La Vérendrye where the winner only twice failed to get an absolute majority on the first ballot; in both cases the transfer changed nothing. In St. Boniface, however, vote transfers drastically altered the results in both the elections of 1932 and 1936. As the only part of Greater Winnipeg not included in the proportionally represented 10-member Winnipeg constituency, St. Boniface had the distinction of being the largest single-member constituency in the province from 1924 to 1949. In 1949 and 1953, it was a huge two-member constituency, reducing the French to a minority in the riding. In 1957, when proportional representation and transferrable voting were eliminated, the constituency of St. Boniface was reduced in size, and the French regained the slight majority they hold today. In spite of the racial composition of the riding, however, most elections were remarkably free of racial tension.

Because of these complications, the only way to ascertain how the French felt about candidates and issues is to examine the first ballot results in selected polls⁹ situated in the "French quarter" bordered by the Red River, the railway tracks, and Marion Street. Second and third ballots are virtually useless for the purposes of this analysis because there is no way of determining which polls, and consequently which ethnic group, is responsible for specific transfers.

⁸For an explanation and discussion of the system, see Donnelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-78.

⁹See Table 7, page 123.

TABLE 7

FIRST-BALLOT ELECTION RESULTS IN THE "FRENCH QUARTER"
OF ST. BONIFACE CONSTITUENCY 1927 - 1953

	1927	1932	1936	1941	1945	1949	1953
Liberal	808 (F)	1412 (F)	1559 (F)	1080	718	1709	1729 (F)
Progressive	462 (F)					251	110
Conservative	698 (F)	936 (F)	496			877 (F)	127 182 (F)
Labour - C.O.F.	247	896	740	684	1995	571	389 206
Social Credit				764 (F)			551 (F)
Others		285 (Opp. Lib.)			1067 (F) (Ind. L.-P.) 274 90		1465 (Ind. L.-P.)

* The "French Quarter" is the area included in Census Tracts 49 and 50 of the 1961 Census. It gives the French population as 8,335 out of 12,227 (68%) (Canada, D.B.S. General population characteristics by census tract, Census Metropolitan Area of Winnipeg, 1961.)

Legend: (F) refers to French Canadian candidates.
--> Arrows indicate same candidate in successive elections.

Source: Figures compiled from poll-by-poll results published in the Winnipeg Free Press on the day following each election.

The 1927 election in St. Boniface proved to be a tight race, not between a government and an opposition candidate, but between two opposition candidates: Louis-Philippe Gagnon, a past president of the A.E.C.F.M., running as a straight Liberal, and the incumbent, Joseph Bernier, who was running as a straight Conservative after having been an "Independent" in the two previous elections. There was also a doctor running as a Progressive. Throughout the campaign, there was a lively debate in La Liberté between its editor, Donatien Frémont, and members of a newly formed group called Les jeunes libéraux of St. Boniface. The latter, in support of Gagnon, contended that the Liberal Party had been "reformed" and that its new leader, H. A. Robson, was sympathetic to French Canadian interests. La Liberté was skeptical:

On dit beaucoup de bien du nouveau chef de parti, M. Robson. On assure qu'il nous est très sympathique et qu'il serait même disposé à prendre des engagements qui nous donneraient pleine satisfaction. Hélas! nous avons assez payé pour savoir ce que coûtent les promesses électorales. M. Norris aussi, en 1915, avait affirmé qu'il ne toucherait pas aux français!¹⁰

Louis-Philippe Gagnon countered by saying that "minority issues" had nothing to do with the campaign:

Les quatre partis en présence, cette année, n'offrent rien d'autre qu'un programme économique. C'est à ce point de vue qu'il faut les juger.¹¹

La Liberté was not supporting any candidate in particular; it was merely against Gagnon because of his affiliation with the Liberal Party. It praised the Conservatives and Progressives equally, but did not mention the Labour candidate. Labour had yet to make an impact on the French electorate, although the Labour candidate did get a sub-

¹⁰La Liberté, May 25, 1927.

¹¹Ibid., June 1, 1927.

stantial share of the vote in the English areas of the constituency. In any event, both the Jeunes libéraux and La Liberté were probably wrong about what was "meaningful" in the campaign. The French voters ignored La Liberté's warning and gave a plurality of their votes to Gagnon. It is extremely doubtful, however, that this endorsement had anything to do with support of the Liberal Party. As past president of l'Association, Gagnon was obviously "safe" on issues of concern to the minority. Nor did Joseph Bernier's return to a political party seem to have helped him in the French area: he did get re-elected, but mainly on the strength of the English vote in Norwood. The contest between the two men was based more on personal appeal than on their political alignment.

In 1932, Gagnon was again the challenger, but ran as a Liberal-Progressive. There was also a third serious candidate who, while coming third in the French polls, nonetheless won the constituency. Gagnon won the largest share of the French vote, although this again may have been more of a personal than a governmental victory. One noteworthy feature was the rise of the Labour vote in the French polls, indicated not only by the absolute number (25% of the total)¹² but by the second choices on Gagnon's ballots when he was eliminated: sixty per cent went to Lawrence, the Labour candidate, and only forty per cent

¹²The figures for Labour given in Table 7 are probably exaggerated if we accept the following assumptions: a) that about a quarter to a third of the vote in the "French quarter" was actually English--in fact, the poll between the C.P. tracks and the Seine River is known to have been mainly English and Belgian and to have voted consistently Labour; it is included in the figures only for consistency because it falls within the area of the census tract, and b) that the English vote in the French areas was similar to that in other parts of the constituency.

went to Bernier, the Conservative.¹³ Since Gagnon's main support came from French voters, at least some of this sixty per cent must have come from them.

There was a notable lack of any racial animosity in the election.. That some French Canadians ignored the ethnicity of the candidates and voted only on the "issue" of the depression was a development which one of La Liberté's correspondents found disconcerting:

... l'électorat Canadien-français a voté d'une manière bien surprenante. MM. Gagnon et Bernier méritaient mieux. On pouvait être de diverses idées politiques, favoriser tel ou tel candidat, mais, encore une fois, le choix canadien-français eut pu se porter sur les deux candidats de sa race sans préjudice pour personne. Ce vote laisse bien des citoyens songeurs. Est-il un accident causé par la dureté des temps ou est-il un symptôme symbolique?¹⁴

These fears were well-founded. In the 1936 election, both Lawrence and Gagnon were again candidates for the same parties and both received a similar share of the French vote; and in 1941, the French reduced slightly their support of Labour but, for the first time, there were no important French-speaking candidates running and the French voters gave a majority of their votes to the English-speaking government candidate. In 1945, they went one further, not only giving an overwhelming majority to an English-speaking candidate, but a C.C.F. one at that!

The fact that no prominent French Canadian saw fit to present his candidacy in 1941 and 1945 to assure a "French representation" in the Legislative Assembly was a sign that there was no strong demand for one and that no one felt a "need" to volunteer his services. The late thirties and early forties were the years in which "non-party" spirit reached its climax, especially with the formation of the all-party

¹³La Liberté, June 22, 1932. ¹⁴Ibid.

"grand coalition" of 1941. In the 1941 election, the Coalition won 50 out of 55 seats in the legislature, sixteen of them by acclamation. Political partisanship of any kind, after a decade of material hardship and two years of war, was overwhelmingly rejected. With the Thornton law a quarter of a century behind and the last French-English quarrel in St. Boniface having occurred in 1924,¹⁵ with the School Question having had no place in electoral politics in years, it is doubtful if a candidacy based on "racial partisanship" would have been any more successful than one based on political partisanship. The rise and ultimate triumph (in 1945) of English-speaking and Labour or C.C.F. candidates among the French-speaking voters of St. Boniface marks the apogee of the sublimation of the minority into the province as a whole --at least on the electoral level. In the following elections, the C.C.F. vote declined to its previous level of about thirty per cent. That it subsided so quickly can perhaps be explained by the fact that E. A. Hansford, the man whom the French had voted for in 1945, became leader of the C.C.F. Party of Manitoba and made himself the champion of "divorce reform," something which was anathema to the French Catholics. Nor, with one exception,¹⁶ were there Labour or C.C.F. candidates in either La Vérendrye or Carillon.

Instead, another depression-born radical movement proved more attractive to the French ridings. Although Social Credit did not win, at the peak of its strength in 1941, it obtained 29% of the vote in the French area of St. Boniface, 39% in La Vérendrye, and 34% in Carillon.

¹⁵This concerned the split of the St. Boniface School Division between Norwood and the rest of the city.

¹⁶There was an N.D.P. candidate in the 1966 election in Carillon; he obtained 4% of the vote.

This was out of phase with the surge of Socred strength in the rest of the province in 1936. Then the French Socreds did well only in St. Boniface with 23% of the vote in the French area; they had no candidate in Carillon and obtained only 11% of the vote in La Vérendrye. In 1941, Social Credit was definitely on the wane in Manitoba, especially after having joined the "grand coalition." There were only nine Opposition Socred candidates in the entire province--but four of these were French Canadians.¹⁷

This créditisme was probably not borrowed from Alberta, but from Quebec. The late thirties was the time when the Bérêt Blanc movement (it took its name from the white berets worn by the faithful) of Louis Even and Gilberte Côté-Mercier was just getting launched in Quebec. Its first newspaper came out in 1936, and its organization, L'Union des Electeurs, was founded in 1940.¹⁸ Until it was expelled from the national movement in 1949, L'Union des Electeurs was the "Quebec wing" of the party. Its main distinction from the more traditional Social Credit was that, while Western Social Credit was a political movement heavily sprinkled with religion, the Bérêts Blancs were essentially a Roman Catholic sect heavily sprinkled with Social Credit economic theories. Créditiste campaign literature in Manitoba even consisted of papal encyclicals, published and "explained" by a would-be Aberhart named Paul Prince. The cement of Franco-Manitoban society is Roman Catholicism, and it is not surprising that such a society should produce people who wish their every act, even the act of voting, to have religious significance. There was also an element of Poujadiste protest

¹⁷La Liberté, April 30, 1941.

¹⁸Cf. Peter Desbarats, "The Virgin Mary Will Appear Tonight," Saturday Night Magazine, December 1968.

evident in the transferred votes of the Socred candidates in St. Boniface constituency. In 1936, nearly half of the Socred voters gave no second choice--indicating the degree of their conviction--but even more striking, the majority of the others gave their second choices to the Labour candidate.¹⁹ This phenomenon was reproduced at the 1941 election.²⁰

In 1936, La Liberté ignored the Créditiste movement, publishing photographs and biographies of all the French candidates in the province except the Créditistes.²¹ In 1941, it simply noted their existence; but by 1953, when the Créditistes were making a small comeback after thirteen years, La Liberté had mellowed considerably, although it published the following comments only after the election:

Les créditistes accomplissent certainement un excellent travail dans la vie publique. Ils y injectent, de façon plus ouverte qu'on ne le fait habituellement, un courant d'idées saines en insistant sur l'importance des principes de vie chrétienne et sur la nécessité de certaines réformes économiques et sociales.²²

Although the vast majority of Franco-Manitobans never voted Social Credit, the movement had touched a responsive chord in that society.

1941 marked the peak of non-partisanship in Manitoba and a peak in the Franco-Manitoban's "oneness" with his province. But by 1945, the School Question re-emerged to trouble this close relationship. In March of that year, a special education committee of the Manitoba legislature, which had been sitting since 1942, recommended that a system of large school divisions be set up in the province, doing away with the system of one school board to each school building which existed in the rural areas. This recommendation was a direct and immediate threat to the modus vivendi so laboriously preserved for over a quarter of a cen-

¹⁹La Liberté, August 5, 1936.

²⁰Ibid., April 30, 1941.

²¹Ibid., June 22, 1936.

²²Ibid., June 12, 1953.

ture. Larger school divisions (the committee's secretary was speaking in terms of reducing the 1800 school divisions down to thirty-four²³) would certainly destroy the homogeneity needed to make the "underground bilingual system" work.

The threat was immediate because, even before the committee's report was accepted, a bill ("Bill 97") was introduced with a view to putting some of its recommendations into effect, among them an unspecified number of large school divisions. These events placed Sauveur Marcoux, the member for La Vérendrye, in a very awkward position because, not only was he a member of the cabinet, but also a member of the education committee.

Large school divisions were opposed, in principle and in practice, by the A.E.C.F.M., La Liberté et le Patriote,²⁴ the clergy, and probably the vast majority of Franco-Manitobans. Marcoux, in order not to cut off communication between the minority and the government, chose not to make himself the interpreter of this discontent. Instead, he chose the way of compromise, making the committee's recommendation unanimous in exchange for some important changes in those recommendations.²⁵ Once he had voted in favour of the education committee report, Marcoux was honour-bound to support the bill which followed logically from it.

²³Quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press, April 3, 1945.

²⁴La Liberté had merged with, or rather swallowed up, the only French newspaper in Saskatchewan, Le Patriote, in 1941.

²⁵La Liberté et le Patriote, October 12, 1945. One of these changes was that no large school division be established without a majority vote in the proposed district.

Edmond Préfontaine, the government member for Carillon, took a radically different stand. He not only made himself the spokesman for all the minority's objections during debate on the committee's report, but also led a backbenchers' revolt against "Bill 97."²⁶ This resulted in important modifications being made and, because the session was drawing to a close, in shelving the bill temporarily. To Préfontaine, Marcoux's compromise stand amounted to treachery; he was convinced that had Marcoux flatly opposed the principle of large school divisions, that principle would not have been accepted by the legislature:

La coalition s'était déclarée pour les grandes unités ... mais pas unanimement. Il y avait beaucoup plus d'opposition à ce projet que le vote de cinq l'indiquait. Quelques coalitionnistes opposés aux grandes unités de plus et quelques coalitionnistes favorables aux grandes unités de moins (surtout s'il s'agissait des "Key men") auraient pu facilement faire pencher la balance du bon côté.²⁷

The election that followed was one between the Coalition and the C.C.F. Party which had withdrawn from it. In Carillon, there was no C.C.F. candidate, and Edmond Préfontaine was elected by acclamation as the government candidate, in spite of his violent opposition to the government's stand on school divisions. He explained his position this way:

Je m'accorde d'une manière générale avec la politique du gouvernement de coalition et j'ai confiance dans l'honnêteté et l'habileté de son chef, le premier ministre Garson, mais je désire me réserver le droit de m'opposer à toute mesure qui ne serait pas selon les dictées de ma conscience ou ne me semblerait pas vraiment libérale et démocratique.²⁸

A few weeks after the election, he redefined his relationship to the

²⁶Winnipeg Free Press, April 6, 1945.

²⁷La Liberté et le Patriote, November 16, 1945.

²⁸Ibid., September 28, 1945.

government in terms which, had they been used earlier, might have compromised his acceptability as a government candidate:

Sans nier que j'aurais aimé voir se former au Manitoba un parti vraiment libéral et démocratique (la coalition, c'est un pas vers la dictature) il n'en reste pas moins vrai que dans les circonstances présentes (je hais la C.C.F.) je demeure un supporteur de la coalition au même titre que nombre d'autres députés qui tout en ayant de fortes convictions personnelles sur certains points n'en supportent pas moins le gouvernement dans l'ensemble.²⁹

The Créditistes claimed not to have opposed Préfontaine out of gratitude for his stand on the school division debate:

... c'était pour souligner notre appréciation de son attitude superbe et courageuse que nous avons résolu de lui donner acclamation dans Carillon.³⁰

Sauveur Marcoux was opposed, however, not only by a Créditiste, but also by a certain A. Lagimodière who claimed to be in favour of the Coalition, but opposed to large school divisions. Préfontaine, safe in his own riding, campaigned openly in La Vérendrye in favour of Lagimodière. The campaign was very bitter, and for the first time in nearly twenty years, was being fought on a "gut issue" for the minority.

Both sides claimed the support of l'Association. On the surface, at least, the Lagimodière-Préfontaine position seemed to be closest to the A.E.C.F.M.'s, but then Marcoux also claimed to be against the large school divisions:

Je n'ai jamais favorisé l'adoption du Bill des Grandes Unités Scolaires ... Ceux qui connaissent la situation savent les nombreuses démarches que j'ai faites pour en diminuer le danger.³¹

To prove his point, Marcoux published the text of a letter sent to him by the executive of l'Association congratulating him on his stand.

²⁹Ibid., November 16, 1945.

³⁰Ibid., November 9, 1945.

³¹Ibid., September 28, 1945.

L'Association was, in spite of itself, irrevocably committed in the campaign and, two weeks before the election, it set forth its views in a lengthy communiqué in La Liberté et le Patriote.

In effect, L'Association came out in favour of both sides, and refused to admit that a division on principle was involved:

L'Exécutif crut que MM. Sauveur Marcoux et Edmond Préfontaine, qui ayant pris à la Législature au sujet des Grandes Unités Scolaires une attitude qui à première vue, ait pu paraître contradictoire, avaient cependant tous deux voulu le bien de la cause avec une sincérité qui ne saurait être mise en doute, et on comprend alors que l'Exécutif ait envoyé une lettre de remerciements à l'un et à l'autre de nos représentants, pour le travail qu'ils avaient accompli tous deux, soit pour amoindrir les effets nocifs du bill, soit pour le faire retirer complètement.³²

In a mild reprimand to both candidates, the communiqué ended by stating that the question of the large school divisions should not be made an election issue.

In any event, it is doubtful whether the issue of the tactics to be used in combatting large school divisions was decisive. This issue was debated in only one riding,³³ and one with a popular incumbent at that. On first ballot, Marcoux was safely ahead of his two opponents,³⁴ and Lagimodière's transfer ballots put him over the top.³⁵ The majority of Paul Prince's votes can probably be discounted as hard core Créditiste.

Four years later, the voters of La Vérendrye and Carillon again

³²Ibid., October 12, 1945.

³³In St. Boniface, there was no mention at all of large school divisions since, in effect, it already had a "large school division" --i.e. comprising more than one school house--and any bill passed on the subject would probably not have affected it.

³⁴See Appendix A.

³⁵Winnipeg Tribune, October 18, 1945.

saw the spectacle of Marcoux and Préfontaine fighting each other across their constituency lines. This time, however, the issue was not particular to the Franco-Manitobans: the point at issue was the Coalition government itself. During the year preceding the election, the Manitoba Democratic Movement had been formed by disgruntled Liberals and Conservatives who wanted a return to party politics because the Coalition had allegedly perpetuated a ruling clique and stifled effective opposition. These dissidents crossed the floor to the opposition side and formed, in effect, a small coalition to get rid of the large one.

In the light of the 1945 election, it came as little surprise that Edmond Préfontaine should be a founding member of the Manitoba Democratic Movement, or that Sauveur Marcoux should oppose it and choose to stay in the cabinet. It was not astounding, either, to see Marcoux taking his revenge and campaigning in Carillon in favour of Préfontaine's opponent, or to see Préfontaine again supporting Marcoux's opponent in La Vérendrye. What may have been surprising was Préfontaine's call for a return to party politics. For decades, it had been held as an article of faith that partisanship had been the undoing of the minority and that salvation lay in a modus vivendi protected in part by vigilantes within the government caucus.

Sauveur Marcoux made sure that these "truths" were not forgotten and included the following message in his advertisements:

Le groupe français compte un seul représentant dans le cabinet provincial en la personne de l'honorable Sauveur Marcoux.

Donc le 10 novembre l'élément français du comté de La Vérendrye décidera par son vote si les Canadiens-français du Manitoba continueront d'être représentés au conseil des Ministres.³⁶

³⁶La Liberté et le Patriote, November 4, 1949.

Préfontaine's answer to that was:

Si le fait d'avoir un ministre ne veut dire autre chose que sur deux Canadiens-français, l'un est muselé et l'autre combat seul, il vaudrait mieux n'en pas avoir du tout.

.....
 A force de nous faire dire qu'il faut travailler dans l'ombre, qu'il faut faire attention, qu'il y a des choses qu'il vaudrait mieux taire, l'on finit par avoir peur de son ombre et l'on perd totalement le sens des valeurs.³⁷

Although Préfontaine was not arguing against the minority's participation in the government, he was saying that its present representative, along with other members of the Coalition, had become overly fond of power and impervious to criticism. In fact, Préfontaine was still, even in 1949, indirectly an exponent of the minority's participation in the government: by explicitly calling himself a Liberal, he knew that since the Liberals were in a majority within the Coalition, he would find himself in the government caucus if he succeeded in destroying the Coalition and the members of the M.D.M. reintegrated their parties. This is in fact what happened.

Although the Franco-Manitobans had an excellent opportunity in 1949 to show how they felt on the issues of party v. non-party government or of participation v. opposition to government, they did not avail themselves of it. The voters of La Vérendrye and Carillon merely re-elected their respective antagonistic incumbents. The voters of St. Boniface, with two members to elect, also availed themselves of the opportunity to be unenlightening: they rejected their C.C.F. opposition incumbent (see page 127) and voted for a Coalition Liberal and an anti-Coalition Conservative, both long-time city aldermen.

The sequel to the Préfontaine-Marcoux fight over the Coalition

³⁷Excerpt from a radio speech given during the 1949 campaign (Mr. Préfontaine's private papers).

turned out to be anti-climactic. After the election, the Conservatives, with two exceptions, went into opposition, thereby ending the Coalition and leaving Manitoba with a Liberal-Progressive government. The Manitoba Democratic Movement disbanded and its members reintegrated into their former "parties." In 1951, Sauveur Marcoux died and Edmond Préfontaine replaced him in the cabinet as the representative of the French minority (with the portfolio of Municipal Affairs).

The Liberal majority in the Coalition need not have feared its demise. Manitoba, in the early fifties, was a good place to be a Liberal. Federally, the Liberals had been in office since 1935, and both federally and provincially, the Conservatives were without an organization to speak of in constituencies where they were not already represented. They were no threat and, in June 1953, the government was returned with a handsome majority. The breakup of Coalition had not immediately heralded the return of party politics in the full sense of the term because the Conservatives had not had time to establish themselves as a credible alternative. In the meantime, the Liberal government, made up of almost the same persons under the same Premier as the Coalition government, continued in office.

In the general election of 1953, Edmond Préfontaine had only token opposition from a Social Crediter and won the biggest victory of his career. In La Vérendrye, Marcoux's successor was also successful against a Socred opponent--although he had a tougher fight of it. In St. Boniface, the results were more confusing, as usual. There, the francophone electorate voted for Roger Teillet, Liberal-Progressive, and for J. Van Belleghen, Independent Liberal-Progressive. (This did not constitute opposition to the government, however; it was merely an

expression of personal loyalty to the city's popular bilingual Belgian mayor and incumbent M.L.A.) But the message was the same: at the end of the non-political years, the Franco-Manitobans were overwhelmingly committed to the party in power, namely, the Liberal Party.

There is no little irony in the fact that, after embracing the "new order of politics" in the 1920's partly because of its lack of political partisanship, the Franco-Manitobans should emerge from that era fully committed partisans--and this, in large measure, precisely because of their commitment to the government during the non-political years. The government which took power in 1922 by defeating a Liberal administration, itself had become a "Liberal" administration by 1953. The French, in their commitment to the government, had followed every step in that evolution and emerged in 1953 with the same label: Liberal. The conservative philosophy of the Liberal-Progressive government suited their mentality, and they had no objection to the "Liberal" label because they had been accustomed to it at the federal level for years.

Thus, at the end of the non-partisan era, the Franco-Manitobans found themselves partisans once more. But, whether they could use this partisanship with the same astuteness as they had in the past, was a question . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE ROBLIN ERA: THE PERSISTENCE OF HABIT

By 1958, Manitobans had been with a "depression-minded" government for thirty-six years. Elected partly as a result of a post-war depression, sustained during the Depression and maintained in anticipation of another post-war depression, it was no longer attuned to the times when uninterrupted prosperity followed the war. By the end of the 1950's, Manitobans were ready for a government which would invest in the future, not hedge against it. Habit was hard to break, however, and it took them two elections to effect the change. In the general election of June, 1958, the Conservative Party under Duff Roblin was elected with a minority of the seats in the legislature (26 against 19 for the Liberals and 11 for the C.C.F.). In May, 1959, Roblin was returned with thirty-six out of fifty-seven seats. In the words of Professor W. L. Morton:

Manitoba had voted for Roblin and change, but, ironically, it had done so with a Campbellite caution.

It is therefore necessary to remember that the new government was not, and could not be, a complete departure from the old. For one thing, the Liberal opposition remained too strong, both in the Legislature and in the country, as narrow margins of victory in the constituencies showed. Any failure of the government, any recession from prosperity, might bring the Liberals back to office.

Manitoba had not endorsed a man, a programme, or an anti-political movement of emotion. It had returned to party politics. . .¹

¹Morton, op. cit., page 484.

Manitobans in general had been indecisive in 1958, abandoning the old, but not quite embracing the new.

Franco-Manitobans, who had become accustomed to the old, were not as ready to abandon it. It was not that they feared change, for they had nothing to fear in the new leader of the up and coming Conservative Party. Duff Roblin, the grandson of Sir Rodmond, had been openly sympathetic to the French and had been the first party leader in decades to use French in the legislature. La Liberté et le Patriote had no reservations about him:

Il est personnellement et ouvertement sympathique à la cause française. Ses interventions en Chambre, en français, furent probablement le fruit d'un calcul de parti, mais il est possible aussi d'y voir une manifestation de sa pensée personnelle et de son influence véritable.²

However, the party leaders' attitudes towards French Canadians was hardly an issue during the campaign because Premier Campbell had been equally sympathetic. As La Liberté pointed out:

Les deux partis auront de quoi se vanter et il y aura ample raison pour une diversité d'opinions parmi les nôtres, sur le meilleur choix à faire pour l'avenir, comme cela se produira sur presque toutes les questions qui seront mises en jeu pendant la campagne. Les deux peuvent demander de l'appui. Les deux le méritent. D'autres facteurs décideront de quel côté penchera l'électorat.³

La Liberté was right: other factors would matter more than "la cause." Personality factors mostly. In fact, La Liberté explicitly counselled a "personality" approach to the election and itself gave outright endorsement to one candidate, Edmond Préfontaine, who, by 1958, had become the "grand old man" among French Canadian public figures in Manitoba. La Liberté went on to say that, in constituencies where a French-speaking and an English-speaking candidate were running, the

²La Liberté et le Patriote, May 9, 1958.

³Ibid.

French-speaking candidate should receive support if he were at least as good as his rival. This was an oblique endorsement of Stan Bisson, the Conservative candidate in La Vérendrye, who was running against the first English-speaking candidate in that constituency's history, Liberal Stan Roberts. But, it was also an endorsement of a number of other French Canadians running against English-speaking opponents in ridings where the French were a small minority (among them, G. Molgat, Liberal, Ste. Rose; M. Boulic, Conservative, Cypress).

La Liberté's counsel seems to have been followed.⁴ In St. Boniface and Carillon, the two Liberal incumbents, Roger Teillet and Edmond Préfontaine, won virtually every French poll in their respective constituencies. The extent of these two victories indicated not only personal support, not only support for the government, but a perfect fusion of both--the right candidates for the right party. While the province was changing, the French Canadians seemed to prefer going on as before.

Elections in other constituencies, however, indicated that this was not irrevocable. Stan Bisson, the first Conservative in La Vérendrye since 1941, actually won a majority of the French vote in the constituency. Bisson obtained 936 votes to Roberts' 740 in polls known to have a majority of the French voters.⁵ Since Roberts had much greater majorities in the non-French areas, (especially Steinbach) he won the

⁴Though probably not as a result of its having made it. La Liberté's circulation in Manitoba is only 6,000, and although it is a fair reflection of what goes on in the French community, it has little real influence within it.

⁵Calculated from the poll by poll results given in the Winnipeg Free Press, June 17, 1958.

constituency anyway. In other French-speaking areas throughout the province, the Conservatives did relatively well,⁶ depending upon the local candidate's appeal, which seemed to indicate an open-minded approach and left the door open for change.

Even if they had mainly voted for the outgoing administration, the Franco-Manitobans were not frozen out of the new one. Marcel Boulic, the forty-two-year-old owner of the Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes creamery was appointed Provincial Secretary in the Roblin cabinet. This appointment was interpreted as a sign of goodwill and an expression of Roblin's intention to maintain close contact with the French community:

Cette nomination a été prévue par les commentateurs comme un geste envers la population de langue française ...

.
Ce geste de l'hon. M. Roblin confirme à un moment opportun les sentiments bénévoles que le nouveau chef du gouvernement ne cesse de manifester sur ce point depuis qu'il a pris en main la direction de son parti.⁷

It was also recognized as maintaining a tradition:

La nomination de M. Boulic comme secrétaire provincial et membre du cabinet par l'hon. Duff Roblin a été interprétée par tous les observateurs, comme la continuation d'une tradition manitobaine qui date de l'année 1889 et qui a été honorée depuis ce temps à l'exception de la période de la lutte scolaire.⁸

If ever the Franco-Manitobans had a need for a representative in the cabinet, it was in 1958. As a result of the appalling state of public education in the province, the Campbell government had appointed a royal commission to inquire into the state of education and to make recommendations. A practical result of the Franco-Manitobans' co-

⁶See Table 8, page 142.

⁷La Liberté et le Patriote, July 11, 1958.

⁸Ibid., September 25, 1959.

T A B L E 8

RESULTS OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE VOTE IN FRENCH CANADIAN
 POLLS IN CONSTITUENCIES OTHER THAN THE THREE UNDER STUDY:
 GENERAL ELECTIONS OF JUNE 16, 1958 AND MAY 14, 1959

	1958		1959	
	Lib.	P.C. (Boulic)	Lib.	P.C. (Comeau)
CYPRESS Constituency				
Haywood	85	<u>138</u>	80	<u>160</u>
St. Claude	<u>198</u>	<u>186</u>	167	<u>275</u>
Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes	109	<u>317</u>	69	<u>351</u>
EMERSON Constituency				
St. Joseph	<u>38</u>	22	<u>41</u>	29
Letellier	<u>105</u>	2	69	<u>157</u>
St. Jean Baptiste	<u>137</u>	64	86	<u>259</u>
MORRIS Constituency				
La Salle	49	<u>108</u>	42	<u>118</u>
Starbuck	41	<u>152</u>	60	<u>124</u>
Elie	67	<u>99</u>	64	<u>104</u>
St. Eustache	<u>168</u>	95	125	<u>143</u>
St. Francois-Xavier	11	<u>45</u>	17	<u>76</u>
ROCK LAKE Constituency				
Bruxelles	<u>115</u>	29	<u>128</u>	30
Mariapolis	<u>66</u>	54	50	<u>84</u>
St. Alphonse	<u>54</u>	11	--	--
Dunrea	<u>85</u>	65	<u>80</u>	76
SPRINGFIELD Constituency				
Ross	<u>27</u>	16	<u>48</u>	25
Ste. Geneviève	<u>68</u>	19	<u>69</u>	41
Dufresne	23	<u>24</u>	29	<u>39</u>
Lorette	9	<u>104</u>	101	<u>162</u>
Lorette West	33	<u>94</u>	39	<u>116</u>
STE. ROSE Constituency				
Laurier	<u>61</u>	31	<u>140</u>	50
Ste. Rose	<u>480</u>	40	<u>452</u>	97
Ste. Amélie	<u>95</u>	12	<u>100</u>	19
Toutes Aides	<u>96</u>	10	<u>86</u>	11
T O T A L	2220	1737	2142	2546

Source: Winnipeg Free Press of June 17, 1958, and May 15, 1959.

operation in the Campbell government had been the appointment of Brother Joseph Bruns, a St. Boniface educator, on the Commission chaired by Dr. R. O. MacFarlane.⁹ The Commission's interim report was expected momentarily.

Only the most naïve could believe that the Commission would recommend anything but larger school divisions. The French, with the help of other groups, had succeeded in scuttling such a reform thirteen years earlier. This time, however, even they recognized the crying need for reform. The question was, how would these reforms come about? Could they be implemented while at the same time maintaining the cultural and religious status quo with regard to the French Catholic minority? Only the maximum amount of co-operation on the part of the minority and the maximum amount of goodwill on the part of decision-makers (the Royal Commission members, the legislature, the cabinet . . . the Premier) could safely see the minority through the critical period ahead.

As expected, two months after the 1958 election, the Commission's interim report was published.¹⁰ As expected, it recommended a system of large school divisions. The terms under which this was being proposed, however, could not have been more congenial to the French. Apart from less crucial matters, such as the exclusion of elementary schools from the new divisions, the methods of electing trustees and the mode of administration, the most important recommendation was that

⁹Bruns was a French-speaking Marianist Brother of German descent who, at the time, was principal of Provencher School.

¹⁰Interim Report, Manitoba Royal Commission on Education, August, 1958.

. . . the Province be divided into 50 to 60 School Divisions. It further recommends that this task should be performed by a Provincial Boundary Commission which would start with present inspectoral divisions and which would also take into consideration area, assessment, total population, pupil population, communications, and social and religious factors.¹¹ (Italics mine)

Only if this principle were rigidly adhered to in practice was there any hope that the minority could maintain the required homogeneity in its schools to prevent assimilation of its children. With the publication of the interim report, the first hurdle had been cleared.

The new Conservative government, although in a minority situation, wasted no time in meeting the issue. It called a fall session, among other things, to implement the MacFarlane Commission's preliminary recommendations. With respect to the large school divisions, the government's legislation adhered closely to the principles laid down in the Commission's report. With this second hurdle cleared, La Liberté, acting as a spokesman for the A.E.C.F.M., now came out in favour of the proposed education reforms and, in a series of articles, explained at length to its readers why the proposed new school divisions were different from the ones La Liberté had been opposing since 1945.¹² As a result of the new legislation, a boundaries commission was set up, and the government appointed as its chairman, Judge Alfred M. Monnin of St. Boniface who, until that time, had been president of the A.E.C.F.M. A third hurdle had been cleared.

Working with unusual speed for a government commission, its report was presented in the middle of January, 1959, and a province-wide referendum on the new boundaries was called for the end of February.

¹¹Ibid., page 45.

¹²See La Liberté et le Patriote from October 3 to November 28, 1958.

These boundaries were a cartographer's nightmare and sociologist's dream. There was hardly a straight line in the province as a result of the Boundary Commission's desire to ensure the maximum amount of social homogeneity consistent with efficient administration. In one case (the White Horse Plains Division) a division was made up of two non-contiguous parts. Four near-homogeneous divisions grouped nearly all the rural French Canadian centres (Red River, Seine River, Mountain, and White Horse Plains). The fourth hurdle had been cleared, and Franco-Manitobans now breathed easy. A reform that could have turned out to be catastrophic for them would now turn out, in La Liberté's interpretation, to be a positive boon to la survivance because, with better schools, it was expected that more students would finish Grade XII, and thus learn more French and more religion in schools still controlled by the minority.

...rien n'indique que les Canadiens-français auraient dans l'avenir prévisible une occasion aussi favorable de consolider leurs positions scolaires.¹³

In its final editorial before the referendum, La Liberté asked Franco-Manitobans to vote "affirmatively and unanimously" in favour of the new divisions, not only on their merit, but also out of gratitude for its treatment:

Un groupe minoritaire qui conserve sa grandeur d'âme sait exprimer sa reconnaissance sans servilisme, et faire avec sérénité un acte de foi dans le progrès vers un but désiré. C'est ce geste qu'il semble opportun de poser le 27 février.¹⁴

The Franco-Manitobans gave the proposed reform their massive

¹³Ibid., February 20, 1959.

¹⁴Ibid. It should be pointed out that La Liberté was somewhat more enthusiastic than most of the Franco-Manitoban élite. Its editor, Father Durocher, was a personal friend of the Premier.

support. In the entire province, only one polling division turned it down. By La Liberté's count,¹⁵ the French vote was 6700 to 1500 in favour, or 82%.¹⁶ This support was probably given for a much more pragmatic reason than gratitude since the government had offered heavy financial inducements to areas accepting large school divisions. The point is, however, that only after acceptable boundaries had been established, thus reducing the fear of assimilation, could the Franco-Manitobans express an opinion based on financial considerations.

A general election followed two and a half months later, and it was obvious that the support given the large school divisions did not rub off on the government. The three constituencies of St. Boniface, Carillon, and La Vérendrye all returned Liberal members with solid majorities. On the surface, at least, such a result seemed to indicate a decisive rebuff to the Roblin government, and a lack of response to a "political opportunity" on the part of the Franco-Manitobans. In 1958, they might have been excused for voting for the "wrong" party on the grounds that they had no indication that the government was going to be defeated. In 1959, however, there was no doubt as to who would form the next administration, or that this administration was the most openly sympathetic and forthcoming towards the French minority since 1915.

The May 1959 election results bear close examination, however. If the Liberal candidates in St. Boniface and Carillon (Larry Desjardins

¹⁵Ibid., March 6, 1959.

¹⁶It is interesting to note that some observers still find this result hard to believe. Accustomed to thinking of the French as an obstructionist lot, Professor W. L. Morton writes: ". . . in the Mennonite and French districts of the Red River Valley, the plebiscites resulted in rejection." (Morton, op. cit., page 486.)

and Edmond Préfontaine) repeated their 1958 performance by sweeping the French-speaking areas in these two constituencies, it must be pointed out that, in both cases, the contest was one between a popular and prestigious French Canadian Liberal against a lesser known or totally unknown non-French Conservative. In Carillon, Préfontaine's challenger was a certain P. J. Thiessen from Steinbach whom nobody had even heard of in the French community. In St. Boniface, the Liberal candidate was something of a folk hero even before he entered politics¹⁷ and his opponent was a lack-lustre businessman.¹⁸ It is interesting to speculate what the results might have been had the party labels of these men been reversed.

That is not to say, however, that the Conservative defeats in the French constituencies were due exclusively to a bad choice of candidates because this "bad choice" in itself symbolized the commitment of the French to the Liberals. The fact was that virtually all the French Canadian public figures of note were attached in some way, if only through personal friendship, to the Liberal Party. It was impossible to find anybody of note to run under the Conservative banner. This was not the result of any conscious opposition to the Roblin government, however. In the years since 1916, the French Canadian élite had become a tightly knit group operating through l'Association. The long years of co-operation between l'Association and the Liberal-

¹⁷He had once been a hockey player, and was now president of the local hockey team as well as on the executive of the "Winnipeg Blue Bombers"; he was also a public relations agent for the Montreal Canadians while managing his two funeral parlours. He had, a few years previously, served two terms as a city alderman.

¹⁸Harry DeLeeuw, although bilingual, was English-speaking and was more closely identified with the Belgian community.

Progressive government meant that many personal friendships had developed between Liberals and the French Canadian élite. In this respect, the Conservatives, being without power, had also been without friends. The return to party politics did not mean that the personal acquaintances of former years should cease. This close contact also meant that the French were better acquainted with the policies of the Liberal Party and, conversely, less acquainted with Conservative policies and attitudes. If knowledge breeds trust and ignorance breeds suspicion, then the French Canadian élite tended to trust the Liberals and be wary of the Conservatives. Only in 1962 did the Roblin government "land" a French Canadian of note, and even at that, he was a converted Liberal!

In areas outside St. Boniface and Carillon, the French had leaned slightly toward the Conservatives in 1959. In La Vérendrye, the French polls gave a majority to a French Canadian Conservative (981 to 851)¹⁹ against the incumbent English-speaking Liberal, and the latter again won on the strength of greater majorities in the non-French polls. Elsewhere, there was also a slight tendency toward the Conservatives²⁰ but this could also be attributed to strong individual candidates. In its analysis of the results, La Liberté concluded that French Canadians had not really been decisive one way or the other in the election:

Il n'y avait pas, en effet, à l'occasion de cette élection une prise de position catégorique à prendre entre l'un ou l'autre des deux partis traditionnels, du point de vue de l'élément français. Espérons qu'un tel choix ne s'imposera pas dans l'avenir.²¹

¹⁹Calculated from the poll by poll results given in the Winnipeg Free Press of May 15, 1959.

²⁰See Table 8, page 142.

²¹La Liberté et le Patriote, May 22, 1959.

This is probably a valid interpretation. The essential point was, however, that because of the particular circumstances, the French did not really have a chance to express themselves on their acceptance of the Roblin administration. 1959 was the chance missed . . .

During the three years which followed the 1959 election, Roblin kept up his courtship of the French minority, in spite of the apparent rebuff. The Cercle Molière (a St. Boniface theatre group) received government grants, St. Boniface College received government grants, the French textbooks prescribed by l'Association for use in Grades IV and up were now recognized by the Department of Education. In 1962, the teaching of French was proposed from Grade I and the programme adopted the following year was the one drawn up by l'Association for teaching it as a mother tongue, not as a foreign language.

At the end of 1962, a snap provincial election was called. The Franco-Manitobans had a chance to make up for the opportunity missed in 1959. This, they overwhelmingly and categorically refused to do. In all three constituencies under study, they had a clear choice, little affected by personality factors, between the Conservatives and Liberals. In all three, they voted overwhelmingly Liberal. To this, La Liberté would comment:

Faut-il alors crier à l'ingratitude? Il y aurait de quoi. Aucun premier ministre manitobain n'a montré autant de sympathie, aussi ouvertement et aussi pratiquement, aux Franco-Manitobains depuis 1916, allant au devant, si nécessaire, de l'opinion publique.²²

The reasons behind the massive rebuff given Roblin go much deeper than mere "ingratitude." In the years between the elections of 1959 and 1962, there occurred a series of events which, each in its own way and

²²Ibid., January 4, 1963.

to varying degrees, served to more than offset all the goodwill Roblin might have acquired as a result of his forthcoming attitude towards the French.

The first of these events was the death of Marcel Boulic, the French Canadian cabinet minister from the constituency of Cypress. This untimely death cut off the one effective channel of communication between the Premier and the minority, a channel which would be sorely missed in the next few years. On the one hand, the Premier would have no exponent other than himself to argue in cabinet in favour of the "rehabilitation" of the minority in the age of the "Quiet Revolution." On the other hand, he would have no one through whom he could reassure the suspicious French Catholic clergy of his good intentions nor through whom he could ensure the co-operation of the French Canadian élite.²³

The second event was the most important of all, one which turned out to be Roblin's Waterloo as far as the French Canadians were concerned. Two months after Boulic's death, the final report of the MacFarlane Commission came out.²⁴ To the surprise of everyone, and probably exceeding the hopes of even the Catholics of the province, the report came out in favour of public aid to private schools:

All things considered, the Commission agrees that some measure

²³The Premier did seek other go-betweens, but these were either suspect by the élite (Winnipeg lawyer Maurice Arpin), engaged in controversy with it (Father Durocher, editor of *La Liberté*) or ineffectual (Brother Bruns). Maurice Arpin, as personal friend and advisor to the Premier, would nevertheless become a prime architect of the Shared Services legislation in 1964, and "Bill 59" permitting the use of French as a language of instruction in 1967.

²⁴Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Education, 1959.

of public support should be extended to private and parochial schools which provide a satisfactory standard of education.²⁵

Thus, with those simple words, the Manitoba School Question was wide open again. For years, it had lain dormant both because of the seeming hopelessness of obtaining any change in the law, and because a large number of Catholics, especially French ones, were unaffected by its rigidities, they being either in control of school boards, or under the administration of lenient ones.

The Manitoba School Question had always had a dual aspect, that of language, and that of religion. After the abolition of the dual system of education in 1890, the Laurier-Greenway compromise permitted the establishment of "bilingual schools" which were, in turn, done away with by the Thornton law of 1916. Immediately after, a modus vivendi had been worked out which permitted the continued existence of bilingual French schools wherever French Canadians were in control of school districts. The Laurier-Greenway compromise also permitted the teaching of religion at the discretion of school boards during certain hours, if a certain number of parents requested it. This meant that, because of the compactness of French Canadian groups in Manitoba, the majority of them did, in fact, have French and religious instruction in their schools, which were public schools.

Because the Catholic population of Manitoba, as a result of the heavy immigration at the turn of the century, became predominantly "non-French,"²⁶ and because most of these Catholics were dispersed

²⁵Ibid., page 180.

²⁶In 1961, Manitobans whose mother tongue was French made up 6.6% of the population, but Catholics made up 23% (Canada, D.B.S., 1961 Census of Canada, Bulletins 1.2 - 9 and 1.2 - 6).

throughout the province or in Winnipeg, and thus were usually in a minority in Protestant school districts, they were the ones who were usually forced to erect separate schools. By 1965, there were only six French parochial schools out of a total of over thirty²⁷ in the province, and these accounted for only a small proportion of the total number of French students. Thus, the Manitoba School Question, which at its origin had concerned the French Catholic minority almost exclusively, had in time become an almost wholly non-French problem.

The French minority had never recognized this, however.²⁸ For the French, la langue et la foi had been inextricably associated and the clergy made sure that there would be no dissociating the two. The clergy, usually much more Catholic than French, constantly exhorted their flock to give of their money and prayers for the separate schools, even though most of them had never seen the inside of one. All Franco-Manitobans were Catholics and, as such, the problem of the separate schools was a part of their folklore, a key ingredient of la cause.

The MacFarlane Commission had indeed resurrected the School Question. Where there had been little, if any, hope before of obtaining relief for the separate schools, now there was a very real hope. After the government had been so forthright with regard to the implementation of the MacFarlane Commission's interim report, it was reasonable

²⁷Manitoba, Report of the Special Committee on Shared Services, 1965, Schedule C. This report also indicated that there were 54 private educational institutions at the primary and secondary levels in the province. The figures given above are for the strictly parochial schools, i.e. schools which parishes were forced to establish because no agreement could be arrived at with local school boards for the teaching of religion in the public schools. Although the figures given are for 1965, the situation had changed little since 1959.

²⁸Partly as a result, the Protestant majority had never recognized this either.

to expect it to implement the full report.

The clergy, La Liberté, and Franco-Manitoban leaders generally seized upon the issue and elevated it to a status of life and death importance. As a consequence, they also made it a supreme test of Roblin's "good intentions" and would henceforth judge him on this alone. An example of the quasi-deification of the MacFarlane Report, and the hopes it raised can be seen from the following excerpt of a circular letter by the Archbishop:

... le chapitre XI du Rapport témoigne de la parfaite sincérité, de l'idéal élevé et de l'intelligence pratique des cinq membres de la Commission. Et il Nous apparaît comme une réponse de la divine Providence aux prières que vous avez adressées à Dieu pour le triomphe d'une cause que nous savons tous être juste.

Aussi Nous attendons-Nous à ce que tous, lors de la prochaine session de l'assemblée législative, fassent preuve d'un sens politique de grande envergure.²⁹

Without a single person in the cabinet to argue the merits of this particular Royal Commission recommendation and, in view of the general hostility of the non-catholic majority of the province, Roblin was understandably in no rush to "faire preuve d'un sens politique de grande envergure".

As the sessions passed and this became obvious, Archbishop Baudoux and his clergy became bitter and resentful. They realized that the first real opportunity for a breakthrough in the School Question since 1897 was slipping away. Each legislative session was preceded by an intensive "pressure" campaign vis-à-vis the government, and each was followed by disappointment over the lack of results. It was as if Roblin was "taking away the rights of the minority" all over again. This sense of betrayal was very much a factor in the 1962 election, and

²⁹La Liberté et le Patriote, December 23, 1960.

Larry Desjardins ruthlessly exploited it in favour of the Liberals in St. Boniface. In its post-election editorial, La Liberté admitted--and regretted--that the disappointment over Roblin's performance on the question of separate schools went a long way in explaining the Conservative defeats in the French constituencies:

... autant le gouvernement Roblin était sympathique et actif pour faciliter la survie et le rayonnement de la culture française, autant il était apparemment insensible aux problèmes de l'école catholique paroissiale, privée de subventions publiques. Le gouvernement Roblin n'a jamais exprimé publiquement la moindre sympathie pour la mise en vigueur des recommandations de la Commission Royale sur ce sujet. Quatre ou cinq phrases ambiguës, c'est tout. A St-Boniface au moins, cette lacune, bien exploitée, pouvait influencer beaucoup d'électeurs. Elle a été signalée d'ailleurs dans le discours de Mgr Flahiff lors de l'ouverture de l'école paroissiale du Sacré-Coeur à Winnipeg, et souvent dans les commentaires d'autres évêques lors de l'ouverture et de la bénédiction d'écoles paroissiales et publiques.

Il fallait être sourd et aveugle pour ne pas réaliser que depuis un an un secteur de la population catholique avait perdu confiance envers le gouvernement Roblin pour ce qui a trait à l'aide aux écoles paroissiales non-subventionnées.

.....
Si ce mécontentement s'est manifesté aux élections générales, on peut le comprendre, sans nécessairement l'approuver. Et en effet, si cela explique en partie les résultats de ces élections dans certains comtés, il faut le regretter.³⁰

Because of its constant association of "la langue et la foi", La Liberté itself could take some of the blame for this state of affairs.

The third event between 1959 and 1962 which contributed to the defeat of the Conservatives in French constituencies was one over which, like the first, Roblin had no control: it was the Liberal leadership convention of April 1961, in which a French Canadian Catholic emerged the winner. At a time when Roblin had no French Canadian representative in his cabinet, the Liberal Party was offering the French Canadians the possibility of having one of their own, Gildas Molgat, as Premier!

³⁰La Liberté et le Patriote, January 4, 1963.

This aspect, needless to say, was played for all it was worth during the 1962 and 1966 elections.

The fourth of the events leading to the Conservatives' defeat in the French areas occurred quite close to the 1962 election and in fact precipitated that election. This was the unsuccessful attempt to bring René Préfontaine, son of Edmond, the Liberal member for Carillon, into the cabinet. For 57 of the previous 60 years, the constituency of Carillon had been represented first by Albert Préfontaine from 1903 till 1935 (with interruptions in 1914-15 and 1920-22), and from 1935 onwards by Edmond. Albert had been first a Conservative, then a Progressive, then a Liberal-Progressive. Edmond started out as a Liberal-Progressive and, although he had been part of the Manitoba Democratic Movement for a while, he had always remained a Liberal. The Préfontaines were a large, close-knit, influential family with a strong sense of duty and which took its politics seriously. In 1962, father Edmond was M.L.A. for Carillon, brother Gilbert was president of the La Vérendrye Liberal Association, and brother René had been a Liberal candidate in the federal election of 1958. In 1959 and 1960, René had been secretary of the A.E.C.F.M. and had had a chance to observe at first hand Roblin's attempts at winning support from the French minority. As Secretary-General of the Manitoba School Trustees Association, he had had close personal contact with Roblin on matters concerning education and had become convinced, somewhat to the consternation of his family, of Roblin's desire to improve the lot of the French minority in Manitoba and possibly also that of the Catholic minority. He also became aware at this time of the crying need for a francophone spokesman in the cabinet.

At the end of 1962, the circumstances were right: there was a vacancy in the constituency of La Vérendrye³¹ and Roblin asked René to enter the cabinet. The swearing-in would be in French, for the first time this century, and it would take place before any by-election were called; when it was called, he would go to the constituents of La Vérendrye as Municipal Affairs Minister. For René to accept Roblin's offer meant fighting his brother's organization in La Vérendrye and sitting opposite his father in the legislature. Although his family was quite hostile to the idea, he decided to go ahead anyway, and the media were called in for a swearing-in ceremony on the morning of November 7, 1962. René, in the days immediately preceding, had been subject to intense pressure by his family and, at the very last minute, was forced to desist. Since this last decision was made mere minutes before the proposed swearing-in, while the Lieutenant-Governor and the press waited, the episode made headlines³² and René and the Premier were embarrassed and hard put for explanations.

The Premier had one further embarrassment. Without René, he had less of a chance of giving his government a new lease on life by taking a Liberal seat. The federal Conservative government was on the verge of collapse, and if he waited to call a general election of his own the following year, a federal Conservative debacle might well have repercussions on the provincial scene. Roblin acted swiftly and two days after the "Préfontaine affair," he called an election for December 14, 1962.

³¹Stan Roberts had resigned to contest Provencher in the federal election of 1962.

³²See Winnipeg Free Press and Winnipeg Tribune of November 7, 1962.

In the two weeks that followed, René Préfontaine had time to reconsider his position. Caught between the bitter-end partisanship of his father, and his devotion to la cause which he had learnt from childhood, he chose the latter and entered the fray as Conservative candidate in La Vérendrye. Much damage had been done, however; to many, he was not only a "turncoat," but an indecisive and unreliable one at that. The Préfontaine family quarrel was out in the open, with René's brother and father calling for his defeat, and insisting that the prodigal son had been misled. One of the speakers at the Liberal convention in La Vérendrye claimed that "René was lured away with promises that he could serve the French Canadian cause. This is hog-wash . . ."33

That convention chose an amiable, unpretentious Shell oil agent named Albert Vielfaure to oppose René. If the family quarrel was unfortunate in some respects, it did crystallize the issue at stake for the voters of La Vérendrye: partisanship and the representation of local interests only v. representation in the Roblin government in the name of Franco-Manitobans in general. Advertisements for Préfontaine read:

La question fondamentale dans La Vérendrye consiste à savoir lequel des candidats est le mieux qualifié et sera le mieux placé pour servir la province et les électeurs du comté.³⁴

Advertisements for Vielfaure read: "Pour une représentation à votre niveau par quelqu'un du comté . . ."35

In the Préfontaine appeal, there was a somewhat clumsy attempt

³³Winnipeg Free Press, November 24, 1962.

³⁴La Liberté et le Patriote, November 30, 1962.

³⁵Ibid., December 7, 1962.

at capitalizing on his advantages as a public man should he win the election. Vielfaure successfully exploited this by presenting himself as the home-grown boy who was no smarter than the rest of them and thereby capitalizing on the Franco-Manitobans' inferiority complex which made them suspicious or jealous of those among them who succeeded in public life--and the Préfontaines had certainly "succeeded." Whatever the reasons in any case, Vielfaure took the seat by a margin of over 300 votes, winning a majority of the French polls.

In Carillon, even though neither the Liberal or Conservative candidates were French-speaking,³⁶ the "Préfontaine affair" was also an issue. The Liberal nominating convention turned into a farewell night for Edmond Préfontaine (who was retiring from politics) in which "René's defection was played for all its emotional mileage."³⁷ Both major party candidates were little known and a Créditiste candidate made relatively little impact, so the French were, in effect, voting for either the Liberal or Conservative parties. By a wide margin, they chose the Liberals.

In St. Boniface, finally, the French voters also had a real choice. The Liberal incumbent was Larry Desjardins; the Conservatives had a credible alternative, however, in the person of Brunelle Léveillé, manager of the publishing firm which printed La Liberté and a member of the St. Boniface School Board for twelve years. Like René Préfontaine, he was equally ministrable. "The campaign in St. Boniface promises no

³⁶The Liberal candidate, Leonard Barkman, did make an attempt at "frenchifying" himself with the help of Molgat. One of his advertisements read: "Pour assurer la victoire de Gildas Molgat, notre distingué compatriote [sic], votez pour Leonard Barkman." (La Liberté et le Patriote, December 7, 1962.)

³⁷Winnipeg Free Press, December 4, 1962.

special issues," said the Winnipeg Free Press, "but René Préfontaine and aid to private schools lurk underground, unmentioned."³⁸ Not quite unmentioned. Rarely, if ever, had the Winnipeg dailies given more coverage to the French constituencies. Furthermore, the separate schools issue grabbed headlines throughout the campaign. A few days after the election was called, the Catholic president of the Manitoba Liberal Association accused Roblin of having made a "secret deal" with René Préfontaine concerning separate schools as a condition of his entry into the cabinet.³⁹ This kept the issue in the news throughout the campaign. On the day before voting day, the headline in the Winnipeg Free Press read: "Textbook Seizure Ordered" followed by:

A court bailiff appeared Wednesday at a St. Vital home to seize school textbooks which have become the central point in a test case to see whether or not the Manitoba government will allow free texts to be distributed to the parochial school students.⁴⁰

This was all Brunelle Léveillé needed: at the polls the following day, he lost his deposit.

Duff Roblin had been handicapped by the lack of a French Canadian spokesman, frustrated in his attempt at getting one, plagued by the School Question, and opposed by a French Canadian leader of the Liberal Party. Yet, none of these factors should have prevented a politically aware electorate conscious of its true interests as a group, to give him some measure of support. In 1962, the Franco-Manitobans did not constitute a politically aware electorate conscious of its true interests. The long years of being "non-partisan" on matters of concern to the minority had dulled its political instincts. La Liberté

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., November 13, 1962.

⁴⁰Ibid., December 13, 1962.

succinctly summarized the irrationality of the 1962 vote:

La consultation populaire du 14 décembre au Manitoba a été d'une importance plus qu'ordinaire dans la vie des citoyens franco-catholiques de la province. Un ami de l'Est en a résumé le sens en une phrase: "Il va falloir continuer à compter sur M. Roblin pour représenter l'élément français et catholique au sein du cabinet". Une bonne vieille dame, pour sa part, dit simplement: "Enfin, La Broquerie a un député". [A. Vielfaure was from La Broquerie.] Un homme d'affaires, de son côté reprend une phrase célèbre de Gérard Filion, qui écrivait, après la montée créditiste aux récentes élections fédérales: "Le Québec n'est pas une province comme une autre, elle est plus bête".⁴¹

During the second session after the 1962 election, in spite of his having been rejected by the majority of Catholics in the province, Roblin decided to take action on the question of private and parochial schools. He introduced a bill for "Shared Services" which would permit students in these schools to avail themselves of such facilities as school bus rides, free textbooks, and the use of public school gymnasiums, laboratories, etc. It was a far cry from what the MacFarlane Report had recommended, and a far cry from what the hierarchy was willing to accept as a minimum.

Archbishop Baudoux reacted in the same way as Archbishop Langevin had on the question of the Laurier-Greenway compromise. To him and his clergy, Roblin's offer was a plot to make Catholics accept what he considered a totally unacceptable solution. On a local public affairs programme on television, Baudoux said that the Catholics had asked the Premier for bread and had been given a stone.

In the legislature, the Shared Services legislation was opposed by two M.L.A.'s: one (Fred Groves) was an extremist opposed to any form of aid, and the other was Laurent Desjardins who acted as spokesman

⁴¹La Liberté et le Patriote, January 4, 1963.

for the Archbishop. As a result of this opposition, the bill was referred to a committee and was passed only during the 1965 session of the legislature. Although the hierarchy co-operated in its application, it had missed an excellent opportunity to use the Shared Services programme as a "foot-in-the-door" in order to obtain better things. Its negative reaction ensured that, at least for the moment, Shared Services would not be broadened beyond the terms of the existing legislation.

If Baudoux had acted in a manner reminiscent of Langevin, he also suffered some of the same consequences, namely a falling out among the ranks, especially of the young. The Shared Services episode had emphasized the clerical dominance of Franco-Manitoban society and sparked a counter-reaction among many who felt that Baudoux and Desjardins were not speaking in the true interests of the minority. Partly as a result of this, but mostly as a result of Quebec's Quiet Revolution and the consequent "awakening" of French Canadians everywhere, some young Franco-Manitobans, for the first time in decades, started to take a very active interest in the affairs of the French minority and to seriously bring into question its values.

This was manifest in the founding in 1964 of a bilingual give-away newspaper in St. Boniface (the St. Boniface Courier) whose French editorial page was used to comment on, and often criticize, Franco-Manitoban institutions; in an attempt to de-clericalize the A.E.C.F.M. at its bi-annual congress in November 1965; in the founding of the Association Québec-Manitoba, a cultural group whose purpose was to bring Quebec chansonniers to Manitoba. This movement within the Franco-Manitoban community culminated in June 1968 in the holding of the Rallye du Manitoba français and, in December 1968, in the abolition of the

A.E.C.F.M. and its replacement by the Société Franco-Manitobaine. But if a "new wave" or "rebirth" of Franco-Manitoban society seemed to be under way in 1969, in the spring and summer of 1966 the Franco-Manitoban establishment, clerical and Liberal, was still firmly in control and, in fact, was undergoing a period of "backlash" in reaction to the first stirrings of the "young Turks."

Such was the context in which the June 1966 election took place. That is not to say that the composition and orientation of Franco-Manitoban society was an issue in that election. In fact, it very definitely was not. Not a word was said in either *Carillon* or *La Vérendrye* about "Franco-Manitoban society." In St. Boniface, many words were spoken but, in retrospect, they were useless: no one was listening.

Nothing had happened between the 1962 and 1966 elections to change the minds of the Franco-Manitobans regarding their political status. The party leaders were the same, their Liberal M.L.A.'s were the same, their Conservative opponents could only repeat arguments which had been rejected three and a half years earlier. In St. Boniface, these arguments in favour of establishing a bridge between the minority and the Roblin administration were articulated by the above-mentioned "young Turks," one of whom was the Conservative candidate, a twenty-six-year-old French Canadian lawyer named Rémi Lafrenière. Their position is best expressed in the Courier's editorial the week before the election:

Au niveau politique, l'infâme "affaire Préfontaine" a profondément marqué la façon de penser de la nouvelle génération franco-manitobaine. A cause d'une partisanerie stupide, le groupe franco-manitobain s'est vu enlever une voix au sein de l'administration du jour (il s'agissait alors de l'administration Roblin).

A St-Boniface, lors des élections qui ont suivi "l'affaire Préfontaine", un candidat de valeur a brigué les suffrages avec l'assurance implicite et quasi-publique que s'il était élu, il occuperait un poste au sein de l'administration Roblin. Ce candidat a perdu son dépôt, remportant moins de la moitié des votes de son adversaire, qui se présentait comme candidat du parti consacré du franco-manitobain, le parti Libéral.

La bonne foi de M. Roblin a donc été établie sans contre-dit, pour une représentation franco-manitobaine au sein de son administration. Les Canadiens-français ont craché dessus.

Au niveau scolaire, M. Roblin fut le premier chef politique du Manitoba à ouvrir à neuf la question des écoles privées. Pour cet acte seul, il serait possible d'affirmer que M. Roblin est doué d'un certain courage politique.

Et cette fois, ce fut la rebuffade cléricale. Dans une erreur majeure de tactique, l'archevêché de St-Boniface, entre autres, a condamné le plan original des services partagés, affirmant que M. Roblin offrait une pierre alors qu'on lui avait demandé du pain.

Cette attitude de la part du clergé a eu comme effet de compléter le cercle d'opposition au plan de M. Roblin. Face à une opposition unanime, M. Roblin fut forcé, en partie par l'attitude négative du clergé catholique, de remanier son plan de "shared services", le rendant éventuellement beaucoup moins avantageux pour les catholiques qu'il ne l'aurait été si le clergé avait manifesté un certain "optimisme avec réserves" au sujet du plan.

Et nous voici à l'élection provinciale de 1966.

Il semble que ce soit le même M. Roblin, celui qui a fait maintes ouvertures afin d'obtenir une représentation adéquate des Franco-manitobains au sein de son gouvernement, celui qui a tenté d'esquisser une solution possible au sujet de la question des écoles privées, qui a les meilleures chances de remporter la victoire.

A St-Boniface, un candidat intelligent, compétent, détenant d'excellentes relations avec la population franco-manitobaine en général ainsi que des positions de responsabilité au sein de plusieurs organisations typiquement franco-manitobaines, brigue les suffrages ... sous la bannière du parti conservateur.

Est-ce que ce sera encore la même histoire? Les Franco-manitobains rejeteront-ils encore une fois toute possibilité d'obtenir des relations directes avec le parti au pouvoir?

Ou est-ce qu'ils voteront encore une fois de façon aveugle, en bloc, pour le candidat libéral, sans une arrière-pensée envers les conséquences de leur action?⁴²

This appeal fell on deaf ears and, if anything, because of its criticism of the Archbishop, probably drove many French Canadians from the

⁴²St. Boniface Courier, June 16, 1966.

Conservatives.

Throughout the campaign, a lively letter-to-the-editor debate was carried in both La Liberté and the Courier. Those in support of the Conservatives were signed by young professionals or University students; those in support of the Liberals, and in particular L. Desjardins, were signed by respected members of the "establishment." The following excerpt from one of the latter is typical and representative of the majority opinion:

J'aurais vraiment honte d'être représenté à l'assemblée législative par quelqu'un qui fait partie ou est appuyé par ce petit groupe insignifiant qu'on pourrait nommer "les Révolutionnaires à Go-Go".⁴³

The author need not have feared. The three Liberal incumbents in St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Carillon were all returned with increased majorities. In St. Boniface and La Vérendrye, where all candidates were French-speaking, both Conservatives lost their deposits. In Carillon, the French-speaking Conservative did not do much better, losing most of the French polls to his English-speaking opponent!

In 1958 and 1959, the French had given indications of uncertainty concerning their attachment to the Liberal Party. After the events of 1959-62, however, they came back with a vengeance in 1962, and since nothing had happened to change their minds, reaffirmed this stand in 1966. This was the main feature of the Roblin era: the incapacity of the French minority to react positively, as a group, in its own best political interest.

⁴³La Liberté et le Patriote, June 16, 1966.

C O N C L U S I O N

The one constant characteristic of the Franco-Manitobans' voting behaviour from the 1870's through to the 1950's was the desire to protect their minority interests through co-operation with the government of the day. Throughout the 1870's and the 1880's, this was relatively easy in view of their considerable numerical, and therefore political, strength in the province. As their political power diminished with the influx of non-French-speaking immigrants, this became both more essential and more difficult. The years between 1888 and 1916 were the most significant in this regard because this was the period when the majority was most intolerant. Four times during those years the minority exhibited a desire to co-operate with the government: in its support of Greenway in 1888; in its return to Greenway in 1899; in its support of the Conservatives, especially during the latter years of the Roblin administration; and in its support of the Liberals in 1915. The first and last of these instances proved disastrous because the governments the French had supported reciprocated by passing anti-French laws. Although the Liberal Party had been responsible for these, the Conservative Party had been far from blameless: in 1892, it had come down in support of Greenway's school legislation; there had been more than a touch of francophobia in the Conservative's efforts to regain power in 1899; the Conservative "reform" convention of 1915 advocated the repeal of the Coldwell amendments which the party had introduced only three years previously; in 1920, the Conservatives prom-

ised to maintain the school legislation passed by the Norris government.

The constant pressure brought to bear on the Franco-Manitobans put them on the defensive and psychologically conditioned them to accept that any of the democratic niceties could be done away with if it would help la cause. Similar phenomena can be seen in the Southern United States' adopting the one-party system to protect its "way of life" and in Quebec's turning upon itself, "protected" by authoritarian governments and clergy. This did not become fully evident with regard to the Franco-Manitobans until the Thornton law of 1916, but an early indication was the undemocratic goings on during the 1900 St. Boniface by-election.

Since Manitoba had decided that it would not tolerate cultural duality, the only way the French could maintain this duality was out of sight and out of mind of the rest of the province. This they did through the A.E.C.F.M., whose task was to look after the survivance, quietly and by keeping minority issues out of electoral politics.

They were relatively successful throughout the non-political years because, mostly for different reasons, the rest of Manitoban society also underwent profound political changes. The result was that the new approach of the French was perfectly attuned to the new political order in Manitoba and permitted them to demonstrate once again their desire to be part of the mainstream. However, their continued political success was then largely dependent upon the continuance of this particular political environment. They let the clergy and the A.E.C.F.M. look after "minority issues" and after decades of seeing them distinct from electoral politics, they no longer saw their close association when party politics reappeared. The disappearance of

strong and open debate and the dominance of a conservative and quasi-exclusively clerical leadership within Franco-Manitoban society robbed it of its dynamism and flexibility. At the end of the non-political years, when flexibility would have been needed to change political allegiances, the French had, almost accidentally, acquired a very stubborn partisanship.

Throughout the Roblin era, they continued to vote Liberal, reacting negatively to Roblin's overtures and no longer showing a desire to be "in the mainstream." In the spring of 1967, during the first session following the 1966 election, the Roblin government nevertheless introduced a bill to permit the use of French as a teaching language for up to fifty per cent of the time in the public schools of Manitoba. Fifty-one years after the abolition of bilingual schools in Manitoba, la cause, at least as far as French was concerned, was won. Whether it was a fitting centennial project, the result of "greater understanding between races," an attempt to keep Quebec in Confederation, or a political ploy to help Premier Roblin become leader of the Federal Conservative Party, there is one thing it was not: a political victory for the Franco-Manitobans resulting from their astute electoral behaviour.

Yet, just as surely as they voted the "wrong" way during the last ten years, Franco-Manitobans achieved their objective: bilingual schools. Just as surely as they voted the "right" way in 1888 and 1915, they met disaster. Their fate thus depended more on the mood of the majority than any independent political action they may have taken. This is why their political action had usually been oriented toward influencing the majority by participation in government. This

is possible, however, only when some minimum degree of tolerance is there in the first place. A respect for minority rights, as understood in the "moral pact" of Confederation, is a prerequisite in a pluralistic society in order to have meaningful democracy. Denied what it considers to be its inalienable rights, a minority tends to become defensive and insular to the degree that its participation in the democratic process is inhibited. Its capacity for, and tolerance of, dissent within its ranks and, to some extent, its flexibility in voting, depend on a certain sense of security. If Duff Roblin found the voting behaviour of the Franco-Manitobans somewhat frustrating, he might have been reminded that it had its roots in 1890 and 1916.

A P P E N D I X E S

	Page
A : Election Results in St. Boniface, La Vérendrye, and Carillon Provincial Constituencies: 1888-1966	170
B : Election Results in Provencher Federal Constituency: 1871-1968	175
C : Election Results in St. Boniface Federal Constituency: 1925-1968	179
D : Electoral Boundaries in Effect for 1888, 1958, 1959, 1962, and 1966 Provincial Elections	180

A P P E N D I X A

ELECTION RESULTS IN ST. BONIFACE, LA VEFFENDRYE, AND CARILLON PROVINCIAL CONSTITUENCIES: 1888-1966 *

ST. BONIFACE

LA VEFFENDRYE

CARILLON

July 11, 1888	Roger Marion (C) J.-E. Cyr (L)	182 163	W. Lagimodière (IL) L. G. Gagnon (L)	240 179	Martin Jérôme (L) Paul Chenard (C)	126 99
July 23, 1892	J. Prendergast (I) R. Marion (C)	312 312	T. Paré (I) W. Lagimodière (I)	297 227	M. Jérôme (I) T. A. Bernier (C)	199 173
Jan. 15, 1896	J. Prendergast (I) J.-B. Lauzon (C)	357 278	T. Paré (C) W. Lagimodière (IL)	292 251	R. Marion (C) M. Jérôme (IL)	240 213
Feb. 20, 1897 (By-election)	J.-B. Lauzon (C) S. Bertrand (L)	388 208				
Dec. 7, 1899	S. Bertrand (L) J.-B. Lauzon (C)	393 368	W. Lagimodière (L) T. Paré (C)	374 287	M. Jérôme (L) R. Marion (C)	337 241
Nov. 24, 1900 (By-election)	Joseph Bernier (C) Victor Mager (C)	436 282				
July 20, 1903	H. Chevrier (L) Joseph Bernier (C)	593 592	W. Lagimodière (L) J.-B. Lauzon (C)	348 337	A. Préfontaine (C) A. Hébert (L)	399 308

APPENDIX A--Continued

ST. BONIFACE

LA VERENDRYE

CARILLON

March 7, 1907	Joseph Bernier (C) H. Chevrier (L)	749 688	J.-B. Lauzon (C) W. Lagimodière (L)	361 338	A. Préfontaine (C) M. Gervais (L)	423 318
July 11, 1910	Joseph Bernier (C) A. Dubuc (L)	1022 760	W. Molloy (L) J.-B. Lauzon (C)	439 430	A. Préfontaine (C) H. Chevrier (L)	619 544
July 10, 1914	Joseph Bernier (C) L. A. Delorme (L)	1603 1259	J.-B. Lauzon (C) P.-A. Talbot (L)	778 550	T. B. Molloy (L) A. Préfontaine (C)	659 652
Aug. 6, 1915	J. P. Dumas (L) J. A. Beaupré (C) J. P. Howden (IL)	921 790 640	P.-A. Talbot (L) J.-B. Lauzon (C)	713 558	A. Préfontaine (C) T. B. Molloy (L)	629 605
June 29, 1920	Joseph Bernier (I) J. P. Howden (IL) J. P. Dumas (L) C. R. Rice (I) T. Hoornaert (I)	1434 942 730 675 404	P.-A. Talbot (I) L. R. Magnum (Farm.)	1023 709	M. Duprez (Farm.) A. Préfontaine (C)	973 925
July 18, 1922	Joseph Bernier (I) N. M. Sutherland (L) C. W. Foster (Lab.)	2024 1176 1124	P.-A. Talbot (UFM) L. P. Roy (L)	1134 694	A. Préfontaine (UFM) M. Duprez (I)	1010 694

APPENDIX A--Continued

ST. BONIFACE

June 28, 1927 Joseph Bernier (C) 1961
 L.-P. Gagnon (L) 1786
 M. Hyman (Lab.) 1462
 N. A. Laurendeau (Pr) 1183

June 16, 1932 J. Bernier (C) 3483
 H. F. Lawrence (Lab.) 3477
 L.-P. Gagnon (LP) 3283
 D. Campbell (L) 1116
 (Final count gave victory
 to Lawrence.)

July 27, 1936 H.F. Lawrence (I.Lab.) 3157
 L.-P. Gagnon (LP) 3630
 G. C. McLean (C) 2747
 J. F. Jodoin (SC) 1730
 (Final count gave victory
 to Lawrence.)

Apr. 22, 1941 A. L. Clarke (LP) 3684
 E. A. Hansford (CCF) 2759
 A. J. Tarbutt (SC) 1404

LA VERENDRYE

P.-A. Talbot (Pr) 1074
 J. H. Landry (L) 581
 Dr. P. P. Royal (C) 440

P.-A. Talbot (LP) 1540
 R. J. E. Arpin (C) 1419
 A. Ramsay (I) 376

July 4, 1935:
 (By-election)

S. Marcoux (LP) 2209
 J. Hamelin (C) 1379
 A. G. Gobert (SC) 464

S. Marcoux (LP) 1793
 J. S. A. Lemoine (SC) 1303
 J. H. Graham (C) 231

CARILLON

A. Préfontaine (Pr) 1604
 T. B. Molloy (L) 458

A. Préfontaine (LP) 2590
 M. Duprez (C) 804

E. Préfontaine (LP) 1948
 L.-P. Gagnon (LP) 1793

E. Préfontaine (LP) 2430
 C. H. McBurney (C) 1223

E. Préfontaine (LP) 1825
 W. A. Parenteau (SC) 957

APPENDIX A--Continued

ST. BONIFACE

Oct. 15, 1945
 E. A. Hansford (CCF) 6605
 W. H. Tod (IP) 4331
 L. A. Régnier (IILP) 812
 A. McDonald (I) 898
 J. J. Pynoö (LFP) 483

Nov. 10, 1949
 J. VanBelleghe (IP) 3936E
 E. A. Hansford (CCF) 3905E
 Paul Marion (C) 2730
 G. P. Shearer (L) 2647
 E. R. Gagnon (CCF) 1483

June 8, 1953
 R. Teillet (IP) 4530E
 L. R. Fennell (IP) 3580E
 J. VanBelleghe (IILP) 3189
 O. Turner (CCF) 2707
 R. Hughes (PC) 2101
 A. Lemoine (SC) 1420
 K. McKinnon (CCF) 1293
 L. Léger (PC) 737

June 16, 1958
 R. Teillet (IP) 3178
 H. DeLeeuw (PC) 2616
 Ben Cyr (CCF) 1256

May 14, 1959
 L. Desjardins (IP) 3772
 H. DeLeeuw (PC) 2992
 Ben Cyr (CCF) 1309

LA VERENDRYE

S. Marcoux (IP) 1506
 Paul Prince (SC) 913
 A. Lagimodière (IILP) 824

S. Marcoux (IP) 1901
 E. J. R. Arpin (I) 1528

E. Brodeur (IP) 2203
 D. Dufresne (SC) 1576

S. Roberts (IP) 1565
 Stan Bisson (PC) 1395

S. Roberts (IP) 1799
 Ed. Guertin (PC) 1581

CARILLON

E. Préfontaine (IP) Accl.

E. Préfontaine (IP) 2563
 H. B. Johnson (IP) 1963

E. Préfontaine (IP) 3278
 K. T. Kroeker (SC) 1065

E. Préfontaine (IP) 2433
 L. Gauthier (PC) 1047
 H. Mueller (I) 608

E. Préfontaine (IP) 2397
 P. J. Thiessen (PC) 1791

APPENDIX A--Continued

ST. BONIFACE

LA VERENDRYE

CARILLON

Dec. 14, 1962	L. Desjardins (L)	4175	A. Vielfaure (L)	1394	L. A. Barkman (L)	2116
	B. Léveillé (PC)	1937	R. Préfontaine (PC)	1086	P. J. Thiessen (PC)	1278
	I. Wright (NDP)	662	R. Thuot (SC)	719	Ed. Dubois (SC)	811
June 23, 1966	L. Desjardins (L)	4040	A. Vielfaure (L)	1807	L. A. Barkman (L)	2352
	R. Lafrenière (PC)	1750	Stan Bisson (PC)	860	Zeph Audet (PC)	1217
	M. Paul (NDP)	1033			A. Morrison (NDP)	116

*For the 1927-1953 elections, first ballot results only are given.

Legend:	(C)	Conservative	(Lab.)	Labour
	(CCF)	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation	(LP)	Liberal-Progressive
	(Farm.)	Farmer	(LPP)	Labour Progressive Party (Communist)
	(I)	Independent	(NDP)	New Democratic Party
	(IL)	Independent Liberal	(PC)	Progressive Conservative
	(I.Lab.)	Independent Labour Party	(Pr)	Progressive
	(ILP)	Independent Liberal-Progressive	(SC)	Social Credit
	(L)	Liberal	(UFM)	United Farmers of Manitoba

Sources: - 1892 election: Le Manitoba, July 27, 1892.
 - All other results are from the Canadian Parliamentary Guide.

APPENDIX B--Continued

1904	J.-E. Cyr	(L)	1896
	A. C. La Rivière	(C)	1886
1908	J. P. Molloy	(L)	2719
	A. C. La Rivière	(C)	2259
1911	J. P. Molloy	(L)	3049
	J. A. F. Bleau	(C)	2668
1917	J. P. Molloy	(Opp.)	2035
	J. R. Johns	(Gov.)	1850
1921	A. L. Beaubien	(P)	3189
	J. P. Molloy	(L)	2177
	A. Préfontaine	(I)	1428
1925	A. L. Beaubien	(P)	2736
	Comeault	(L)	2626
1926	A. L. Beaubien	(LP)	Acclamation
1930	A. L. Beaubien	(LP)	4562
	Bélanger	(C)	2274
	Kobzar	(IC)	715
	Ayotte	(L)	321
1935	A. L. Beaubien	(LP)	6308
	Bourgeois	(C)	3751
1940	R. Jutras	(L)	3768
	Slater	(I)	3329
	Podolsky	(I)	1765
	Johnston	(C)	1441
	Banville	(ND)	1099
	Gagnon	(CCF)	841
1945	R. Jutras	(L)	4541
	Slater	(I)	2220
	P. Prince	(SC)	1940
	Miller	(CCF)	1838
	Boyd	(PC)	894

APPENDIX B--Continued

1949	R. Jutras MacKenzie	(L) (I)	6834 4008
1953	R. Jutras Thiessen Tinkler	(L) (PC) (SC)	662 2161 1269
1957	W. Jorgenson R. Jutras Campbell Biesick	(PC) (L) (SC) (CCF)	4739 4489 3992 246
1958	W. Jorgenson R. Préfontaine Tinkler Siemens	(PC) (L) (SC) (CCF)	8278 5268 1360 281
1962	W. Jorgenson S. Roberts Loewen Kruszelnicki	(PC) (L) (SC) (NDP)	6214 5290 2504 263
1963	W. Jorgenson S. Roberts E. Dorge	(PC) (L) (SC)	6729 5351 2512
1965	W. Jorgenson G. Barkman W. J. Tinkler F. Anderson	(PC) (L) (SC) (NDP)	6469 5243 1195 542
1968	M. Smerchanski W. Jorgenson H. Blake-Knox L. Reznowski	(L) (PC) (NDP) (SC)	8683 7575 3102 1680

APPENDIX B--Continued

Legend: (C) Conservative
(CCF) Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
(Gov.) Government (Union)
(I) Independent
(IC) Independent Conservative
(IL) Independent Liberal
(L) Liberal
(LP) Liberal-Progressive
(ND) New Democracy
(NDP) New Democratic Party
(Opp.) Opposition
(SC) Social Credit

Sources: 1968 election: Ottawa Citizen, June 26, 1968.

All other results are from the Canadian Parliamentary Guide.

A P P E N D I X C

ELECTION RESULTS IN ST. BONIFACE FEDERAL

CONSTITUENCY: 1925 - 1968

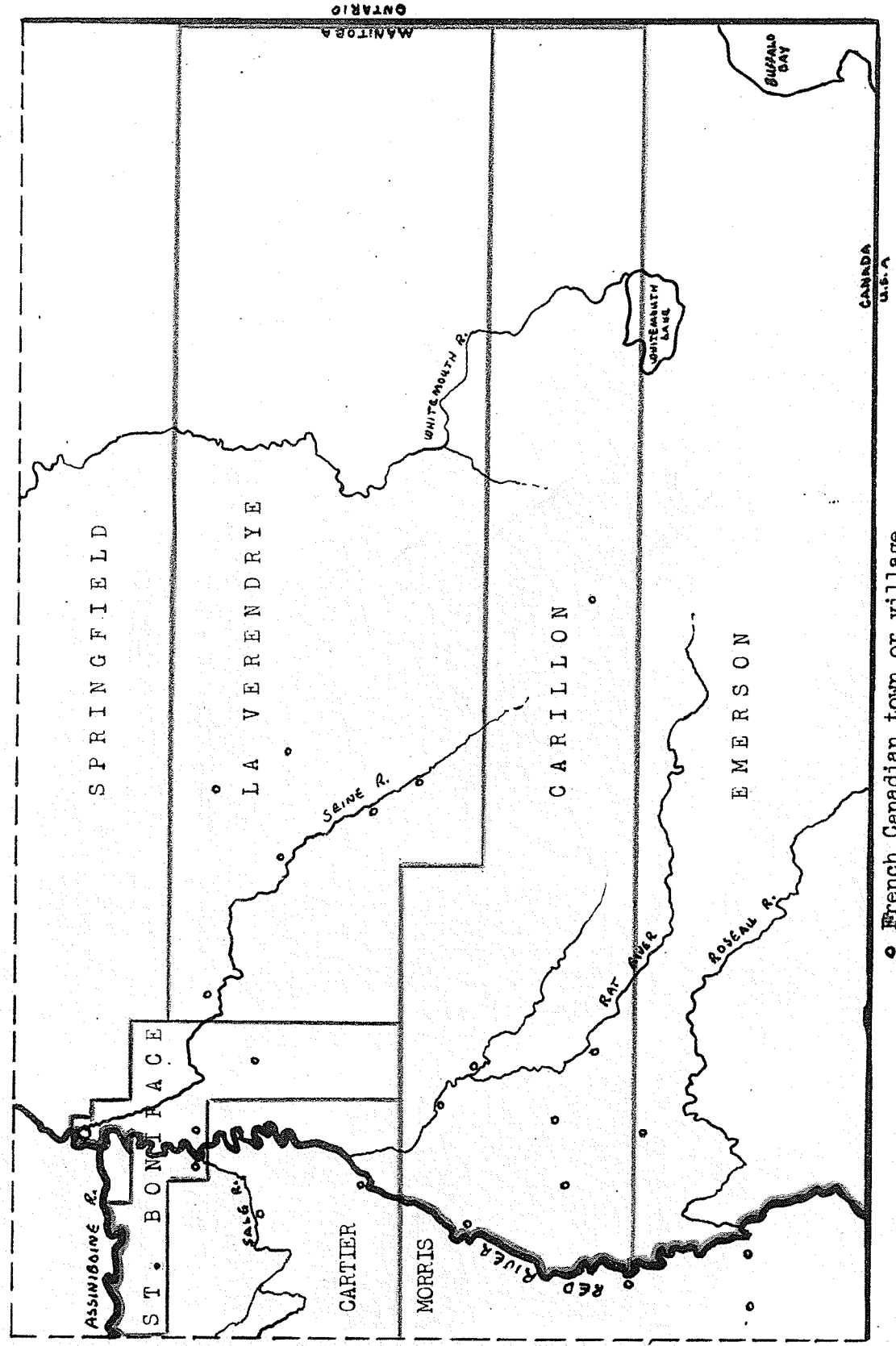
1870 - 1914: Was part of Provencher constituency.

1914 - 1924: Was part of Springfield constituency.

ELECTION	WINNER	PARTY	MAJORITY
1925	J. P. Howden	(L)	1918
1926	J. P. Howden	(L)	2668
1930	J. P. Howden	(L)	2415
1935	J. P. Howden	(L)	5049
1940	J. P. Howden	(L)	4348
1945	F. Viau	(L)	1232
1948	F. Viau	(L)	5311
1953	F. Viau	(L)	2483
1957	L. Deniset	(L)	1561
1958	L. Régnier	(PC)	3188
1962	R. J. Teillet	(L)	2601
1963	R. J. Teillet	(L)	3831
1965	R. J. Teillet	(L)	3430
1968	J. P. Guay	(L)	10429

Sources: 1968 election: Ottawa Citizen, June 26, 1968.All other results are from the Canadian Parliamentary Guide.

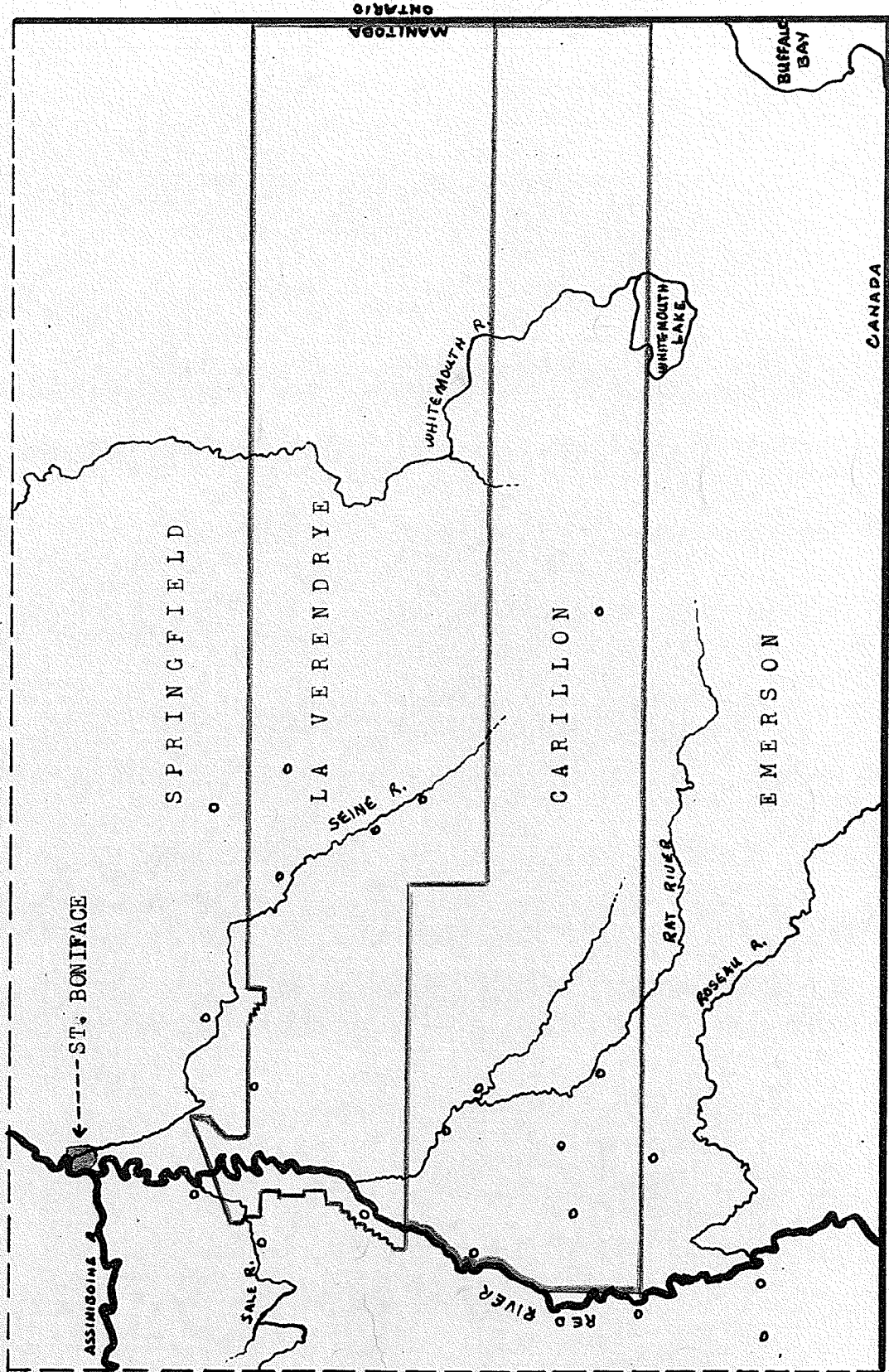
APPENDIX D
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES IN EFFECT FOR 1888 GENERAL ELECTION



o French Canadian town or village.

APPENDIX D--Continued

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES IN EFFECT FOR 1958, 1959, 1962, AND 1966 GENERAL ELECTIONS



• French Canadian town or village.

CANADA
U.S.A.

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