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New Brunswick Reaction to the Manitoba Schools' Question

The Manitoba Schools' controversy not only delivered the final blow to an aging Conservative administration, but also seriously damaged relations between French Catholic Quebec and English Protestant Ontario. This issue also played an important role in the lives and politics of New Brunswickers, despite their geographic isolation from the West. Although the Conservatives continued to hold the majority of seats in New Brunswick, the Liberals made gains in the federal election of 1896. These gains have been attributed, not to the impact of the Manitoba Schools' Question, but to the strenuous efforts of Premier Andrew G. Blair.[1] Yet, a few weeks prior to the election, Blair was considering joining the Conservative campaign and several of the most prominent ministers in his coalition government actively supported the Conservatives.[2]

It has also been assumed that, since the pro-remedialist Cabinet Ministers, John Costigan and George Foster, were re-elected, while Dr. R. C. Weldon, a Conservative anti-remedialist was defeated, "there was at least no outright rejection of remedialism" in New Brunswick.[3] But an analysis of the campaigns in the three constituencies concerned leads to quite a different conclusion. Costigan ran in a Catholic-Acadian area, which would naturally support remedial legislation. Foster's York county was Protestant, but he effectively negated any harmful effects from the promise to pass a remedial bill by telling his constituents that the bill provided no money for separate schools and was therefore useless. Weldon, like Foster, ran in a Protestant county, but his opponent was also an uncompromising anti-remedialist. It is therefore inaccurate to imply that New Brunswickers were generally sympathetic to the

1 J. Murray Beck, *The Pendulum of Power* (Scarborough, 1968), p. 79.

2 J. I. Little, "The 1896 Federal Election in New Brunswick" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1970), pp. 18-20, 142, 211-212.

3 Paul E. Crunican, "The Manitoba Schools Question and Canadian Federal Politics, 1890-1896: A Study in Church-State Relations" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1968), p. 578.

Catholic minority in Manitoba. This paper will show that, while the French-speaking Acadians were very concerned about the fate of their language in the West, most of the English-speaking people were convinced that there should be only one language, not only in the West, but in the eastern provinces as well.

Religious and racial conflict was not new to New Brunswick. In 1871 the province experienced its own schools' controversy when the King government passed the Common Schools' Act, which established a single school system under provincial jurisdiction.[4] This led to violent protests from the Catholic population in the northern counties, culminating in the Caraquet riot of 1875, in which two lives were lost.[5] The provincial government subsequently offered a compromise by passing an Order-in-Council which allowed Catholic children in populous areas to be grouped into the same school or schools, exempted teachers in Roman Catholic religious orders from attending the provincial Normal School, provided they could pass its examination for a teaching licence, and permitted trustees to rent, for school use, buildings belonging to religious orders or to the Roman Catholic Church. No restrictions were to be placed upon the use of such buildings after the close of the school, thereby allowing religious instruction after school hours.[6]

This compromise appeared to satisfy both Catholics and Protestants until 1890 when the Protestants of the town of Bathurst charged that the Catholics were violating the Common Schools' Act and the concession of 1875. Prior to 1890, the Catholics had operated two girls' schools at their own expense, as well as paying taxes to the public schools. They then decided to hire Teaching Sisters who would teach under the Common Schools' Act, and to open certain of the convent school rooms as classrooms under the law.[7] The subsequent migration of students from the public school building, and controversies over hiring teachers, brought a storm of protest from the Protestants. Their reaction was completely out of proportion to the difficulties they faced. Inflammatory circulars were distributed in Kent and York Counties,[8] and numerous petitions signed by about 10,000 persons were presented to the Legislature. Another provincial split along religious lines seemed imminent.

Such a division could have been disastrous for the government of Andrew G. Blair since it was a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives, depending upon support from both the Catholics and Protestants.[9] The Provincial Opposition

4 See Peter M. Toner, "The New Brunswick Separate Schools' Issue (1864-1876)" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1967).

5 Katherine F. C. MacNaughton, *The Development of the Theory and Practice of Education in New Brunswick, 1784-1900* (Fredericton, 1947), pp. 212-216.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 223.

9 Michael Gordon, "The Andrew Blair Administration" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1964), p. 189.

had no party label either, and it had hitherto posed no serious threat as it depended upon petty local grievances for its support. Its leader, Dr. A. A. Stockton, was a Liberal, and he had once been in Blair's government, but he and several others had deserted Blair because the latter had appointed a Catholic as Police Magistrate for Saint John.[10] Under normal conditions, Blair was able to maintain power by keeping his efficient patronage machine running smoothly, but a religious or language controversy could have caused a party split, or have presented the Opposition with a real campaign issue. Premier Blair and his three York County running mates were actually defeated in the 1892 provincial election because Herman H. Pitts, editor of the anti-Catholic Fredericton *Reporter,* who ran as an independant temperance candidate, campaigned primarily against the government's refusal to redress the Protestant "grievances." Fortunately for Blair, the government made gains elsewhere in the province, largely because Opposition leader Dr. Stockton refused to include the schools' issue in his party's platform.[11]

Once in the House, Pitts, who was supported sporadically by the Opposition party, took advantage of every opportunity to forward the complaints of the Protestants. Judge J. J. Fraser of the New Brunswick Supreme Court was chosen to conduct an investigation, and in 1894 he submitted a report which upheld the Catholic position. The provincial Orange Lodge then took the issue to the Equity Court in the case of *Rogers versus the Trustees of School District No. Two, Bathurst.* The court's decision, announced in early 1896, upheld Judge Fraser's findings, and the Bathurst Schools' Question was finally buried.

It was in the bitter aftermath of this affair that the debate over the Manitoba Schools reached New Brunswick. Premier Blair was very concerned that the Manitoba issue might aggravate existing tensions, and in 1895 he wrote a letter to Laurier expressing relief at the postponement of the federal election because "an election immediately upon this remedial order would have set the whole Protestant part of the Dominion aflame . . . it certainly would have done so in a large part of New Brunswick".[12] Several months later, Peter Mitchell, formerly the Liberal M.P. for Northumberland County, informed Laurier that Blair felt that "more harm than good would be done by your visit unless you were prepared to define your position" upon the Manitoba issue.[13] Moreover, Mitchell and Blair agreed that it was too early to try to find a compromise which would satisfy both French-speaking Quebec and the majority of New Brunswickers.

Blair had good reason to worry about the repercussions of the Manitoba controversy, for antagonism between the two religious groups had already begun in New Brunswick. In February, 1896, the provincial Orange Lodge took

10 James Hannay, *History of New Brunswick* (Saint John, 1909), II, p. 359.

11 Saint John *Daily Sun,* 21 November 1892.

12 Blair to Laurier, 23 March 1895, Laurier Papers, Public Archives of Canada.

13 Mitchell to Laurier, 27 July 1895, *ibid.*

a strong anti-remedial stand at its annual meeting. Grand Master Kelley, a Conservative supporter, attempted to straddle the political fence on the remedial issue, but the executive committee criticized him for not taking a more decided stand. The committee's report proclaimed that "no sound argument can be advanced in favour of remedial legislation," and demanded that the section of the Grand Master's address dealing with the Manitoba Schools' Question be struck out.[14] The Lodge also charged Prime Minister Bowell with coercion, and petitioned Parliament to oppose passage of the remedial bill until after the general elections. Finally, H. H. Pitts of Bathurst Schools' Question fame was chosen to replace Kelley as Grand Master.[15]

At the other end of the religious spectrum, New Brunswick's two Catholic bishops remained relatively silent concerning the schools' controversy. In 1891, Bishop Rogers of Chatham had refused to sign Archbishop Taché's petition demanding federal repeal of the Manitoba Schools' Act on the grounds that, although he favoured the petition's demand to sustain separate or denominational schools, he was not convinced of the value of maintaining "the Dual, official languages."[16] Rogers himself admitted that he had taken this position chiefly because "The Leaders of the French Acadian National Party in New Brunswick have been slandering the Episcopate of our Ecclesiastical Province, especially myself, without cause."[17] Even after the remedial bill had been presented to Parliament, Rogers, unlike Bishop Cameron of nearby Antigonish, Nova Scotia,[18] was reluctant to use his influence in favour of the Conservatives. In March he wrote a public letter denying the Saint John *Sun*'s report that he had ever mentioned the remedial bill in a sermon.[19] Finally, a few days before the election, Rogers did commit himself to the remedial cause by issuing a statement which denounced Northumberland County's Independent Catholic candidate, claiming it to be "the duty of a good citizen to advise that the Government and the Government's candidate, Mr. Robinson, be sustained in this critical election, bearing as it does on the stability and validity of the constitution of Canada."[20] New Brunswick's second Catholic bishop, Sweeney of Saint John, maintained a still more scrupulous silence, and no account of his stand can be found in his personal papers or in the local press.

14 Chatham *Miramichi Advance*, 27 February 1896.

15 *Ibid.*

16 "James Rogers' Objections to signing Msr. Taché's Petition", 19 March 1891, Archives, Diocese of Chatham (Bathurst).

17 Rogers to Archbishop O'Brien, 17 March 1891, *ibid.* The Acadian spokesmen were attempting to gain the appointment of an Acadian Bishop. See Robert Rumilly, *Histoire des Acadiens* (Montreal, 1955), pp. 813-816.

18 K. M. McLaughlin, "The 1896 Federal Election in Nova Scotia" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1969), p. 147.

19 Chatham *Miramichi Advance*, 12 March 1896.

20 *Ibid.*, 25 June 1896.

On the other hand, some parish priests undoubtedly took an active part in the 1896 election campaign. John Costigan, Conservative M.P. for Victoria-Madawaska, sent a letter to each of the priests in his constituency asking for their active support,[21] and Father Richard of Rogersville in Northumberland County stated in a newspaper interview that "Je suis prêtre catholique et comme tel mon devoir est de prêcher et pratiquer respect et obéissance à la loi et à la constitution . . . les évêques demandent à leurs diocésains de suivre Tupper un protestant, plutôt que Laurier, un catholique parceque le premier soutient les droits garantis aux minorités par le constitution . . . cet example est digne d'être imité."[22] But not all the priests appear to have been so favourable to the Conservatives and the remedial bill. Editor P. J. Veniot of *Les Courriers des Provinces Maritimes* stated that, at one point, all the Catholic clergy in Gloucester County supported the Liberal candidate because he was an exponent of Acadian "nationalism", or more French language rights in the Maritimes. But the appearance of an Independent Protestant candidate, who opposed both the Acadian cause and the government's remedial bill, caused the priests of the two largest parishes to switch back to the Conservatives; they reasoned that it would be safer to continue their traditional support of the Conservatives rather than risk splitting the Acadian vote and improving the chances of the unsympathetic Protestant.[23] Other priests determined to continue their apostasy, and this drew a rebuke from Bishop Rogers: "The extreme delicacy which I have always observed with both Priests and laymen within my jurisdiction in regard to any political action of theirs, should merit a little consideration from them, before going in opposition to a course recommended not only by their own Bishop, but by the Archbishop of our ecclesiastical Province and by all the other Archbishops and Bishops of the Dominion."[24]

Like the Orange order and the Catholic Church, New Brunswick politicians found themselves deeply involved in the schools' question. The views of the three most prominent Federal representatives illustrate how widely divergent New Brunswickers' opinions were. As the Cabinet's chief spokesman for the Irish Catholics, John Costigan, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, was an uncompromising advocate of remedial legislation. He opposed all negotiations with the Manitoba government,[25] and it was he who appealed to Archbishop Walsh of Ontario for ecclesiastical interference in the election.[26] After Sir Charles Tupper had relieved Bowell of his duties as Prime Minister, Costigan remained in the Cabinet only upon Tupper's promise that the remedial bill

21 Costigan to Rev. Fugal *et al.*, 24 March 1896, Costigan Papers, P.A.C.

22 Shédiac *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 19 June 1896.

23 Veniot to Laurier, 1 December 1896, Laurier Papers, P.A.C.

24 Chatham *Miramichi Advance*, 25 June 1896.

25 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1896, p. 590.

26 Costigan to Archbishop Walsh, 20 December 1895, 11 May 1896, Costigan Papers, P.A.C.

would be re-introduced and pressed through at the first session of the new Parliament, should the Conservatives win the election.[27]

Finance Minister Foster, on the other hand, was a Free Will Baptist and member for the ultra-Protestant King's County. He quite naturally favoured a public school system, and in spite of his denials,[28] many believed that he had joined the January Cabinet revolt against Bowell because of oppostiion to the proposed remedial bill.[29] Yet, he had re-entered a Cabinet sworn to pass remedial legislation, and he obviously had to speak in favour of the bill. He dealt with this embarrassment by emphasizing in Protestant areas that no public money was to be appropriated to support Catholic schools in Manitoba, thereby implying that the bill was useless.[30] This was, of course, dishonest, for he and the other Cabinet Ministers conveniently neglected to point out that the Catholic hierarchy had been assured that these critical funds would be provided. The Dominion Lands Act of 1886 was to be amended so that part of the money raised from the sale of public lands in Manitoba would be given directly to the separate schools, rather than to the Manitoba government.[31]

The stand taken by Dr. R. C. Weldon, Professor of Constitutional Law and Dean of the Law Faculty at Dalhousie University, was much more consistent, for he was the only Conservative Member of Parliament outside Ontario openly to oppose the remedial bill. Realizing that both Sir Charles Tupper and George Foster would support remedial legislation should they be asked to form a new Cabinet after the January revolt, Dr. Weldon had plotted with Bowell to form an anti-remedial Cabinet under his own leadership or that of Judge Meredith of Ontario.[32] Once the remedial bill had been presented, Weldon attacked it wholeheartedly, although he concentrated upon the legality of certain provisions, rather than resorting to emotional appeals. Weldon was not an extremist; he was known for his "French fluency and sympathies"[33] and he even argued that the bill was useless from a Catholic point of view because it did not provide for support of the separate schools, once established.[34] He claimed

27 Costigan to Tupper, 26 April 1896, *ibid.*

28 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1896, pp. 92-99; Foster to Sir Leonard Tilley, 23 January 1896, Tilley Papers, New Brunswick Museum.

29 Fredericton *Daily Gleaner*, 6 January 1896; Costigan to "Your Lordship", undated, Laurier Papers, P.A.C.

30 Fredericton *Daily Gleaner*, 10 May 1896; St. Stephen *St. Croix Courier*, 14 May 1896; Toronto *Mail and Empire*, 25 May 1896, cited in Lovell C. Clark, "A History of the Conservative Administrations, 1891 to 1896" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1968), p. 508.

31 Crunican, p. 384. There must also have been some arrangement whereby the Catholic bishops agreed not to disclose this plan until after the election.

32 John T. Saywell (ed.), *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 1893-1898* (Toronto, 1960), pp. 303, 310.

33 Crunican, p. 443.

34 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1896, p. 3922.

in the House that his Protestant constituents had been given government circulars which stated that the remedial bill was harmless.[35] Ironically enough, Weldon was only stating openly in the House what Foster was proclaiming to exclusively English audiences in the southern counties.

Although newspaper editors obviously were not tied to party policy to the same extent as were men like George Foster, the grip of party loyalty upon the major newspapers of this era was almost as strong as it was upon the politicians themselves. Furthermore, the spokesmen for the party in power risked greater financial losses than the opposition press in contradicting party policy. In spite of this, there was a surprising unanimity of opinion in the English editorials with regard to the remedial bill. The Conservative press went as far as it dared in joining the Liberal condemnations of remedial legislation. The government's recognized provincial organ, the Saint John *Sun*, declared that it "had never been convinced of the power of the government to draft an act which would meet the case of the petitioners and be capable of effective operation in the face of an unsympathetic provincial government."[36] The *Sun* never did actually condone the bill, but as the election day approached, it tactfully adopted a policy of silence upon the subject. The Conservative *Gleaner* of Fredericton was slightly less anti-remedial than the *Sun*; by March it was claiming that remedial legislation was entirely a constitutional matter and that one did not have to favour separate schools in order to support it.[37] Of the English Conservative newspapers, only the Moncton *Times* was enthusiastic about the remedial bill, and in March, it went so far as to suggest that remedial legislation should not be abandoned for any compromise with the Manitoba government.[38]

In the northern counties, the English Conservative newspapers were also unhappy with the remedial bill, but the large Acadian vote seems to have forced them to temper their true opinions. In one editorial, the Chatham *World* suggested that remedial legislation would be undesirable, but was careful to add that the party should not choose "a candidate who is outspoken in opposition to the claims of the Manitoba minority."[39]

The Liberal press was in a much less difficult position, for Laurier's advocacy of a commission of inquiry and moderate concessions to the minority lent itself very easily to loose interpretation. The Saint John *Telegraph* thus could declare obstruction to be "a sacred duty";[40] while the *Globe* proclaimed that Canada should maintain her ethnic and religious diversity through separate schools and only criticised the remedial bill for infringing upon provincial rights. But the Saint John *Globe's* sympathetic attitude was the exception

35 *Ibid.*, p. 4524.

36 Saint John *Daily Sun*, 12 February 1896.

37 Fredericton *Daily Gleaner*, 4 March 1896.

38 Moncton *Daily Times*, 31 March 1896.

39 Chatham *World*, 8 January 1896.

40 Saint John *Daily Telegraph*, 26 March 1896.

rather than the rule. The Liberal Fredericton *Herald* summarily rejected every thing but "a free, untrammelled non-sectarian school system"[41] and the Moncton *Transcript* warned that every vote cast for the Conservative candidate was "a vote cast to trample down the foundation principles of religious and civil liberties bequeathed to us as a Canadian people."[42]

There were no restraints whatever upon the independent press, and the majority of their editorial comments upon the remedial bill made full use of this freedom. The Saint John *Record* damned Laurier's proposed commission of inquiry as "a sheath for the sacrificial knife — the people of Manitoba will be slaughtered by it — not so speedily as with Bowell's weapon, but as surely and effectively."[43] The Hampton *News* ultimately announced that it favoured the Liberals, but it declared that "the time has come when, as a matter of economy and the safety of the government and country, the dual system of language in Canada must cease; it should never have been allowed only so long as to teach the French Canadians English. What other country is there under the sun that would allow such a state of affairs to exist so long as the people of Canada? Did Germany allow it in Alsace-Lorraine?"[44] Like the Saint John *Record*, Pitts' Fredericton *Reporter* felt that the Liberals were not determined enough in their opposition to remedial legislation. It left the average voter, in the absence of an independent ticket, "to appeal to his own best judgement for his own line of action."[45]

The Acadian press, in contrast to that of the English majority, was surprisingly divided upon the remedial issue. The Conservative *Moniteur Acadien* supported the bill wholeheartedly, but the *Courriers*, after initially accepting it, grew more and more critical as the abortive special Parliamentary session of 1896 progressed. The *Courriers* was in sympathy with the Liberals and, like the English Conservative press, it may well have been conforming to party discipline. But unlike his Conservative English counterparts, editor Veniot was not content merely to ignore the issue. He launched a full-scale attack, challenging anyone to "nous montre où le bill rémédiateur garanti le maintien des écoles séparées soit par le gouvernement fédéral ou Manitobain."[46] This argument was based upon the mistaken premise that no money was to be granted to maintain the separate schools, but the *Courriers* could quote from the editorials of the Toronto Tory press and Finance Minister Foster's speeches to reinforce this premise.[47]

41 Fredericton *Daily Herald*, 12 February 1896.

42 Moncton *Daily Transcript*, 5 June 1896.

43 Saint John *Daily Record*, 31 January 1896.

44 Hampton *News*, 5 March 1896.

45 Fredericton *Reporter*, 13 May 1896.

46 Bathurst *Les Courriers*, 12 March 1896.

47 *Ibid.*, 16 April, 28 May 1896.

The acid test to determine the sentiments of New Brunswickers towards the Manitoba Schools' Question was the 1896 election, for each voter had to decide, not only whether he was for or against the remedial bill, but whether or not it was more important to him than other national or local issues. It would be very convenient if we could simply state that each county went either Conservative or Liberal because of the remedial question, but in any election, it is almost impossible to choose any specific issue as the decisive one. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the remedial bill was a major issue in the contest. Judging from the reaction of the New Brunswick press, it is quite safe to conclude that the Conservative position was very unpopular with the English. Among the Acadians, the Liberal stand was obviously less satisfactory, but disenchantment with the Conservative party had been growing, and there was evidence of insincerity even in the government's pro-remedial position. The province had only two Liberal M.P.'s and the crucial task for the Conservative representatives in the southern English counties was to minimize the remedial question in the campaign, largely by stressing other issues. In most of the northern constituencies, the Conservatives had to reverse this strategy. The Acadians were forced to decide between the appeals of the Canadian Church hierarchy and those of the nationalists, who saw an ally in the French-speaking Laurier.

When the votes were finally counted, the Conservatives had dropped in strength from fourteen to nine members while the Liberals had increased from two to five.[48] Unlike many of their Quebec counterparts, the four Acadian-Catholic constituencies continued to support the Conservatives, indicating that religious loyalty still came before nationalism. In sharp contrast, seven of the predominantly English constituencies changed party allegiances, the only two Liberal members having lost their seats. The fact that these two Liberal seats were lost to the Conservatives proves that the remedial question was not the crucial one in at least some of the English constituencies. Equally important was the growing support for the Conservatives' National Policy in certain urbanized areas, renewed opposition to it in rural counties, and local issues such as temperance, patronage, and party personalities.

Of the ten English ridings (Westmorland and Restigouche being the only two with a significant minority of French voters), six had different Conservative candidates than in 1891. But three of these had had previous parliamentary experience, and they won their contests. George Foster had switched from King's to York County; F. H. Hale of Carleton had sat as a Liberal for that constituency from 1887 to 1891; and H. A. Powell of Westmorland had won a federal by-election in 1895. Foster was, of course, a seasoned politician; Hale was a lumber merchant, and one of the most influential businessmen in Carleton; and Powell was an ambitious and energetic young politician who had taken an active part in parliamentary debate, although still a new member.

48 New Brunswick had lost two seats through redistribution since 1891.

The fourth of the five Conservative victories in English ridings was Restigouche, where James McAllister had been the representative since 1891.

G. W. Ganong of Charlotte was the only one of the three Tory novices to win a seat. His family was indisputably the most powerful in their county, for the Ganongs controlled many of the new and growing industries. The other two newcomers were John Chesley of St. John and Judge Morton of King's. Chesley was a very wealthy merchant, and Morton, because of his position, was well known in his constituency. Neither of their defeats could be ascribed primarily to personal weaknesses, nor were the other three Conservative losses due to ineptitude on the part of their candidates. J. D. Hazen of St. John City and County, Dr. R. C. Weldon of Albert, and R. D. Wilmot Jr. of Queen's-Sunbury were all Members of Parliament. The former two were nationally recognized political figures, while Wilmot came from a well-established New Brunswick family, his father having been Lieutenant-Governor.

The above ten Conservative candidates obviously wanted, as much as possible, to avoid the remedial issue in their campaigns. This was easier for the three who had not sat in Parliament during the last session, because their stand on the remedial bill was not a matter of public record. Ganong of Charlotte and Hale of Carleton took particular advantage of this by refusing to take a stand on the issue throughout the whole campaign. Yet, they both made it quite clear that they would feel free to oppose any government measure, should they see fit. But more positive reasons must be found for the government victories; in Charlotte it was primarily due to support tor the National Policy. While this county had remained a lumber and fish producer, the county had always been adamantly free trade, and its Liberal Member of Parliament, A. H. Gillmor, had even been an annexationist in the 1880's. But now the primary industries were overshadowed by the manufacturing industries of the St. Croix Valley, and this area was able to swing the election in favour of the Conservatives, and protection, for the first time.[49]

Since Carleton County was still predominantly a farming and lumbering area, with no important urban centre, protection obviously did not have so strong an appeal.[50] The defeat of the Liberal representative was largely due to the strength of his opponent, F. H. Hale, who had polled a huge majority as the Liberal candidate in 1887, and who had entered the 1896 campaign so

49 Analysis of party vote in Charlotte County:

	1883		1887		1891		1896	
	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C
St. Croix Valley	626	769	660	847	662	792	654	1249
Islands	270	154	424	334	509	311	529	452
South Shore	592	421	736	544	686	520	686	641

50 In 1891 the Conservative candidate had been careful to emphasize that the Conservative party favoured reciprocity. Woodstock *Press*, 2 March 1891.

late that one newspaper felt the Conservatives would not contest the county.[51] The Conservative victories in Charlotte and Carleton were not due to support for the remedial bill, but in fact were dependent upon the Conservative candidates' ability to avoid taking a public stand upon the issue.

York County returned Finance Minister Foster, again not because it supported remedial legislation, but because of his personal prestige and the fact that York had become an unassailable Conservative fortress. This was largely due to the efforts of Alexander Gibson, the most important industrialist in the Maritime Provinces. Ever since Gibson, with his two Nashwaak River parishes, had deserted the Liberals in 1885, the county had returned Tories. The powerful Premier Blair had even been driven from the county in 1892, and his provincial ticket had not been able to make a come-back in 1895. Furthermore, the fact that Foster held a very important Cabinet post, while his opponent was young and inexperienced, gave him a distinct advantage. Although the Liberal candidate bitterly attacked the remedial bill, Foster cleverly side-stepped the issue during his campaign by proclaiming that the bill was useless because it provided no money for separate schools. Once again, the Conservatives were victorious in spite of their remedial bill.

Unlike the aforementioned three Conservative candidates, Westmorland's H. A. Powell was a staunch supporter of the remedial bill. Whereas Foster was obliged to do so, Powell had voluntarily defended the measure several times in the House, going so far as to "affirm broadly and positively the doctrine that there is in this constitution of ours, no such thing, no such constitutional principle, as provincial autonomy."[52] Powell was a Protestant, but the county was one-third Acadian, and this may have increased his pro-remedial fervour. The Liberals did not hesitate to make political capital of this by conducting a bitter anti-remedial campaign in the Protestant parishes, where the Conservatives polled a minority for the first time since 1887.[53] There were other important issues in the campaign, such as the growing unpopularity of the Conservatives' economic policy in the rural areas,[54] and the fear that the government was plotting to sell the Intercolonial Railway to the C.P.R., which would mean that the I.C.R.'s Moncton headquarters and car works would be closed. But these issues were present in 1895, and it would appear that Powell's zealous support of remedial legislation was an important factor in cutting his majority from a substantial 764 in 1895 to 5 a few months later.

51 Woodstock *Sentinel*, 25 April 1896.

52 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1896, p. 147.

53 Westmorland Election Results:

	1891		1895 By-Election		1896	
	L	C	L	C	L	C
(a) Acadian Parishes (Shédiac, Dorchester)	550	1,112	776	1,219	646	1,243
(b) English Parishes	1,507	3,093	2,214	2,535	2,781	1,199

54 A branch of the Patrons of Industry appeared in 1895. See Little, pp. 160-163.

The last English county to go Conservative was Restigouche, surrounded by Acadian counties on the northern tip of New Brunswick. In this sparsely settled and isolated region, national issues were distinctly secondary to local concerns. In fact, few Liberals had ever even contested the riding. Nor were there any religious or ethnic rivalries, for the candidates were usually Presbyterian Scots. The chief opposing forces in the county were the port towns of Dalhousie and Campbellton, on the Restigouche River. Dalhousie was losing its lumber trade to the young and rapidly growing upriver port of Campbellton.[55] This was translated into a political struggle, and in 1891 John McAllister, the Conservative candidate from Campbellton (in Addington parish), defeated George Moffat Jr., a Conservative from Dalhousie. This ended the Moffat family's monopoly on the county's federal representation. In 1896, McAllister supported remedial legislation, and was faced with an anti-remedial Liberal opponent. The Liberal came from Dalhousie, which was sixty percent Acadian, while McAllister's Addington parish was sixty-five percent English. Thus, if the Manitoba Schools' Question were of primary importance, one would expect both the Liberal and McAllister to lose support in their home parishes, but such was not the case. McAllister's Addington majority increased from 120 in 1891 to 150 in 1896, while his opponent gained 60 additional votes in Dalhousie. Yet McAllister did lose considerable support in the other two parishes which had an English majority, suggesting that where local issues were not at stake, the English rejected the Conservatives and their remedial bill.

The remaining five English constituencies switched to the Liberal Party. Only one of the five Conservative candidates had not sat in Parliament during the special remedial session, and so it was impossible for the majority of them to take a neutral stand, as Hale and Ganong had done. Also, none of these constituencies could boast of a Conservative candidate with the power and prestige of George Foster of York; none were as isolated as the pioneer county of Restigouche; and none had significant Acadian populations as did Restigouche and Westmorland. Conditions were ripe for a Liberal victory on the remedial question. Indeed this issue was very important in all of the above five constituencies, but local issues and personalities considerably complicated the picture.

Ironically, a local issue played as important a role in the metropolitan centre of St. John as it did in far-away Restigouche. The issue was connected to the government's National Policy, for, in keeping with the clause that Maritime ports should be used for year-round Canadian trade, Halifax was designated in 1895 to be the winter port for a Fast Line Service to England. After exerting political pressure for years, and launching several ambitious projects to develop her port, St. John had finally succeeded in having a C.P.R. "Short Line" connect her with Montreal *via* Maine in 1889. This enabled St. John to compete with the American city of Portland for Canada's winter trade. In 1896,

55 Provincial Archives of New Brunswick reprint, *The Wood Industries of New Brunswick in 1897* (Fredericton, 1969), p. 21.

St. John citizens had just begun to enjoy the lucrative trade brought by the Short Line, and they feared that, although the Fast Line was to carry only passengers and mail, it would ultimately result in a re-routing of much freight to Halifax. As a result, the traditionally Conservative economic elite formed an Independent ticket for the two St. John constituencies. They did not join the Liberals because this party had traditionally represented lower tariffs, which would bring American industrial competition, and several Liberal spokesmen had been critical of government efforts to develop Maritime ports. One Liberal candidate, J. V. Ellis, was reputed to be a one-time annexationist, and his critics had labelled him as "an enemy of St. John."[56]

The Manitoba Schools' Question was not lost sight of, however, for it was a third factor in the Independent supporters' refusal to join the Liberals. The Independent candidates protested that Laurier's stand would not mean the end of separate schools in Manitoba. Yet they were careful to deny the charge that they were bigots or represented a branch of the Protestant Protective Association, and based their campaign almost exclusively on the port question. Both Conservative candidates supported the remedial bill, although one had not been in Parliament previously. The latter probably had little choice, because it would have been politically embarrassing for two running mates to have divergent views on such an important issue.

In spite of their criticism of Laurier's compromise policy, the Independents developed into a godsend for the Liberal party. The chances for an Independent victory were destroyed when many of its founders became embroiled in a bitter dispute with the Ship Labourers' Union, thus alienating much of their popular support. The Liberals eagerly took a strong pro-labour stand, and the election results show that the Independents succeeded only in undermining Conservative strength, leaving the way clear for the Liberal victory.[57] Thus, the role of the remedial issue in the St. John election was secondary, but largely because the critical port issue overshadowed all other political questions.

The remedial bill was no more crucial to the Liberal victories in King's and Queen's-Sunbury than it had been in St. John. George Foster had cautiously retreated from King's because he had lost the support of the powerful prohibitionist element by failing to have a temperance bill presented to Parliament. The county's Conservatives were unable to decide upon a replacement until

56 Saint John *Daily Sun*, 1 May 1896.

57 Breakdown of vote in Saint John:

		1891	1896
(a) City	Liberals	45%	45%
	Conservatives	55%	35%
	Independents	–	20%
(b) City and County	Liberals	44%	40%
	Conservatives	56%	38%
	Independents	–	22%

the last minute. Nor did either of the 1891 Conservative candidates wish to contest the newly-amalgamated constituency of Queen's-Sunbury.[58] Less than two weeks remained prior to the election before one of them finally agreed to run. No critical local issue can be blamed for the tottering state of the Conservative machine in Queen's-Sunbury; it was a combination of factors such as the growing unpopularity of the government's protective tariff in a rural constituency, and the red flag which the remedial bill represented to the adamantly Protestant electors. Unfortunately, it is impossible to measure separately the effect the remedial bill had upon the Conservative losses in King's and Queen's-Sunbury but the speeches of the candidates prove that it played a significant role in the campaigns.[59]

It is much easier to pinpoint the importance of the remedial issue in Albert County, for it was the principal factor in the defeat of Dr. R. C. Weldon, the Conservative Member of Parliament. Paradoxically, Weldon was defeated in this Baptist constituency, not because he supported remedial legislation, but because he opposed it. He had been too outspoken in his opposition during the last Parliamentary session, and he had alienated his own party, and especially the new Prime Minister, Sir Charles Tupper.[60] As a result, the Conservative government seems to have secretly supported the Independent-Liberal candidate.[61] Tory newspapers attacked Weldon as a traitor,[62] and Albert voters were, therefore, able to vote against the remedial party, with the tacit support of that party.

The Manitoba Schools' Question quite naturally played a highly significant role in the Catholic, largely Acadian, constituencies of Kent, Gloucester, Northumberland, and Victoria-Madawaska. The Acadians had traditionally supported the Conservatives, for the Church had frowned upon the Liberal party, but the growth of French-Acadian nationalism in the late eighties and early nineties had brought insistence upon more representation in the government. Because the Irish-Catholic minority had held a monopoly upon the Conservative candidacies, the Acadian aspirants to power became Liberals. But the Liberal party's opposition to the remedial bill threatened to disrupt the flow of Acadian voters to the Liberal camp. Just as in Quebec, the issue forced the Acadians to choose between Laurier, who represented French-language nationalism, and the Conservatives, who represented loyalty to the Church.

58 L. H. Davies to Burpee, 27 April 1896. Burpee Papers, New Brunswick Museum; Saint John *Daily Sun*, 6 June 1896.

59 Hampton *News*, 18 June 1896; Fredericton *Daily Gleaner*, 22 May 1896; Saint John *Daily Sun*, 19 June 1896.

60 See Little, pp. 172-176.

61 Letter from J. W. Weldon to the author, 25 July 1969.

62 Fredericton, *Daily Gleaner*, 4 April 1896; Moncton *Daily Times*, 30 April 1896.

In this way, the remedial issue saved the English-speaking Conservative Member of Parliament for Kent County. G. V. McInerney had won an 1892 by-election, after four earlier unsuccessful attempts, by taking advantage of the Acadian split between a Liberal and a Conservative candidate. Kent had always been regarded as the Acadians' traditional seat, and in 1895, an all-French convention chose an Independent candidate to oppose McInerney.[63] But with the presentation of the remedial bill in 1896, editor Robidoux of the influential *Moniteur Acadien* felt compelled to support McInerney because he was the official government candidate.[64] As a result, McInerney gained considerably more French votes than in 1892, and increased his majority from 387 to 527.[65]

Although Gloucester County was four-fifths Acadian, it had been represented by Irish Catholics since Confederation. But the Acadian nationalists, led by P. J. Veniot of the Bathurst *Courriers*, were beginning to take over the local Liberal machine. By 1894, a Liberal victory appeared so certain that the Conservative member retired to the Senate, naming an Acadian as his successor. This cut the ground from under the nationalists, at least temporarily, for their chief grievance against the Conservatives had disappeared. As a result, Laurier again permitted the local Liberal machine to remain in the hands of the tiny Protestant minority of Bathurst.[66] A weak Acadian, who had done nothing to offend the Protestants during the Bathurst Schools' controversy, was chosen as the Liberal candidate, and the Conservatives subsequently won the election. By 1896, Veniot had finally consolidated his leadership over the local Liberals, and a nationalistic journalist, Onésiphore Turgeon, was chosen as the Liberal standard-bearer. In an angry gesture of protest, Robert Young, a Presbyterian who had been one of the local Liberal bosses, entered the field as an Independent. At one point, Turgeon even appeared to have the support of the priests, but the appeal of the remedial bill, and the fear that an Acadian split would elect Young, were enough to ensure another Conservative victory.

Unlike Gloucester and Kent, Northumberland politics did not revolve around ethnic differences, for the Acadians were in the minority and it was taken for granted that the Member of Parliament would be English-speaking. Nevertheless a strong rivalry did exist between the Catholics and the Protestant minority. Michael Adams, the Catholic Conservative M.P., was forced to retire to the Senate in January, 1896, because of Protestant charges that he

63 Shédiac *Le Moniteur Acadien*, 15 March 1895.

64 *Ibid.*, 12 June 1896.

65 Comparison of support for McInerney in 1892 and 1896:

	1892	1896
French Parishes	23%	39%
English Parishes	80%	81%
Mixed Parishes	63%	77%

66 Bishop to Laurier, 4 April, 16 April, 11 May 1894, Laurier Papers, P.A.C.

favoured Catholics in the distribution of patronage.[67] His successor, James Robinson, was a Protestant, and he won the by-election. With the June contest, an independent Catholic candidate named John Morrissy appeared. Morrissy realized that the Catholics would not support the anti-remedial Liberals, and that they were angry with the local Conservative machine. His chances were ruined, however, when Bishop Rogers informed his followers that, because of the remedial bill, it was their duty to vote for the official Conservative candidate. The Liberal party did not pose a serious threat for it was handicapped by its anti-remedial position in a county with a slight Catholic majority, as well as by the aging Peter Mitchell who was determined to remain a candidate in spite of his rapidly diminishing popularity.[68] Once again, the Conservatives were saved by the remedial bill.

The final northern constituency, Victoria-Madawaska, had been represented by John Costigan since Confederation. There was no real nationalist threat, although the Liberal candidate was an Acadian. Costigan's championship of remedial legislation only served to tighten his grip upon the Catholic riding. At public speeches, he was able to read directives such as the one from Archbishop Langevin which stated: "Il est maintenant le devoir de tout homme honête [sic] et sincere, mais surtout de tout catholique dans votre comté de vous supporter loyalement."[69]

The Manitoba Schools' Question, therefore, played a significant, if not always decisive, role in the 1896 election in New Brunswick. The number of Liberal representatives increased from two in 1891 to five in 1896. All of these Liberals came from the Protestant southern counties where the Liberals' anti-remedial stand was a definite asset in their campaign. But, in all of these constituencies, the determining issues of the Liberal victories were to be found elsewhere; they included disillusionment with the government's local policies, as in St. John and King's and with their National Policy, as in Queen's-Sunbury and again in King's. In Albert, the Manitoba Schools' Question indirectly aided the Liberal victory, by alienating the Conservatives from their own candidate. Only in Westmorland did the issue promise to be truly decisive in favour of the Liberals, but the Conservative Member of Parliament managed to retain his seat by a handful of votes. It was in the northern counties that the remedial question played a crucial role. In contrast to Quebec, the Catholic population of New Brunswick was effectively delayed in its swing to the Liberals. From evidence provided by the Orange Lodge, the Catholic clergy, the press, and the election campaign, it is obvious that the Manitoba Schools' Question occupied a very important place in the minds of all New Brunswickers, disturbing not only the "pervasive localism," but also that "mutual respect and tolerance" between the two cultures, which has traditionally been thought to mark New Brunswick politics.[70]

67 Chatham *World*, 31 December 1895, 4 January 1896.

68 See Little, pp. 210, 215-216.

69 Archbishop Langevin to Costigan, 4 June 1896, Costigan Papers, P.A.C.

70 Hugh G. Thorburn, *Politics in New Brunswick* (Toronto, 1961), pp. 184, 186.