

people in the country will not bother themselves very much about this constitutional question' and that there are other questions greater than the constitutional question involved in this matter. The rights and liberties of the British people have been too closely connected with the constitution to have it treated thus lightly. I also wish to offer my protest against the suggestions which have been constantly made that the people of the Northwest Territories will be less generous than the people of Nova Scotia in dealing with this question. That suggestion has been made more than once on the other side of the House. What my views are in respect to the separate school question as an abstract proposition, has in my opinion, really nothing whatever to do with this discussion. Hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House have discussed this question on its merits as have hon. gentlemen, I must admit, on this side of the House. Although I do not intend to follow their example I intend to claim the privilege of briefly putting on record the views which I hold with regard to this question. After nearly 22 years residence in the Northwest Territories, I believe firmly that the public school system as at present administered is the one best suited to the needs of the country.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. LAKE. The fact that separate schools have been so little taken advantage of shows that except in certain centres and thickly-populated districts there is no demand for them. Taking an average settlement in that country, the separate school system is nearly impracticable and places a heavy burden on the people in the increased taxation incidental to minority schools.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. LAKE. In certain instances it would actually prevent the formation of schools at all. I do not wish to be understood as favouring the exclusion of religious teaching from the education of the young. No education, in my mind, can be satisfactory which does not include the ethics of religion, but I say that doctrine and dogma should be kept to the church and to the home.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. LAKE. And I am opposed to a purely sectarian education. That is my own personal opinion, and I believe that I am as well entitled to hold that opinion and state it in the House as any other gentleman. In the public school system of the Northwest Territories provision is made to allow of religious teaching, as has been frequently stated in this House. But the impression which has been conveyed by many of the speeches that this religious teaching is the regular rule, is an erroneous one. It is not, as a matter of fact, the general rule. In fact, I do not know personally of

one particular instance in which religious teaching is given during that last half hour. But it is open, under the ordinances, to any and every denomination to teach religious doctrine in the same school during the last half hour in the afternoon if they desire to do so and can obtain the consent of the parents and the trustees. If they do not do so it is the fault of the people themselves; it means that they do not wish it, and I take the ground that they should not be forced to have it. The separate school system in its practical working out means a hardship in the case of any Roman Catholic who prefers a public school education in the Northwest Territories, and I would say again that there are many Roman Catholics in that country who do prefer a public school education.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. Is it not a fact that in the school districts where the Catholics are in the majority they have not the choice, but are obliged to go to the public schools, because they cannot form separate schools? Under the ordinance, in every school district where the Catholics are in a majority they cannot form a separate school, but have to go to the public school?

Mr. LAKE. That is quite true. But they would control the teachers and, of course, they could have religious instruction for the last half hour of the afternoon. That is quite the case, and the hon. gentleman has stated what is really a very good case in favour of our national school system as it exists. I do not think you need go further than Ottawa to find gentlemen of that faith who believe in the public school system of education as contrasted with the separate school system.

I would like to know what the educational clauses, as at present embodied in the Bill, really mean. In a House where there are so many lawyers we laymen might have expected to get a clear answer to this question: What do these clauses really embody; what do they really mean? But we find that legal opinions differ in regard to this as widely as the poles, and I am inclined, after hearing a good many of the speeches pro and con, to believe that they mean just about the same thing as the original clauses.

Now, let us trace this question up; let us consider the way in which the original clauses were arrived at, and the way in which these substituted clauses were arrived at. A sub-committee of the Privy Council was appointed to deal with this question; it was composed of four gentlemen of the legal profession, all men of repute—the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Secretary of State and the Postmaster General; the three first of these were gentlemen who belonged to the Roman Catholic faith and were gentlemen who are avowedly in favour of separate schools. They took the unusual course of issuing a pamphlet and distributing amongst the members of this