

I believe that the people of Canada, since this unpleasant question is brought before us, will expect us to meet it plainly and openly, and discuss it with the hope of finding a happy solution.

I believe there is a great deal in that. My hon. friend was not in at the commencement of my remarks but I said myself that I did not care so much what the constitution did as to provide such a solution of this matter as would contribute to the peace of the provinces which it is now proposed to admit to the confederation. I might also read what my hon. friend the Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson) has said. His remarks were about on the same line as those of my hon. friend the Minister of Finance. He also tried to impress the House with the idea that we have virtually national schools in the Northwest Territories and that we have no more separate schools in the proper sense of the word. I need not read what he said because what he said has been repeated in some other places and it is already in 'Hansard.' My hon. friend the Minister of Finance said one thing which I commend to the attention of the House and of the country. He spoke about good faith. He said that in keeping that national school system we have to allow a half hour for religious instruction because we have moral obligations towards the minority. That is right. I believe that to be the case but in such a matter as that I would go a great deal farther than the law. In a country like this we cannot have too much tolerance wherever it is honourable and feasible. My hon. friend the member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) has said many things which I would like to touch upon but I do not wish to detain the House beyond six o'clock.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Go on.

Mr. BERGERON. What does my hon. friend say? I commend this to the attention of my hon. friend the Minister of Justice. The hon. member for Brandon quoted Mr. Forget, the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, as follows:

Until the date of the ordinance of 1892 we had never been denied the right to administer our schools, to regulate the programme of studies, to choose the text books, to control the religious instruction and to authorize the use of the French language whenever thought convenient. These rights were exercised by the Catholic section of the board of education, and strictly speaking they were sufficient to preserve to our schools their distinctive character of Catholic schools.

I think hon. gentlemen understand that. That is what we understand by separate schools. It is not in the word; it is in the spirit if it. Later on the Lieutenant Governor states:

All the schools, public and separate, Catholic and Protestant, are placed by the ordinance of

Mr. BERGERON.

1892 under the direct control of a Protestant superintendent of education and of a council of public instruction.

Further:

And a council of public instruction, composed of the members of the executive committee, in which the Catholics have not one single representative.

Then Monseigneur Taché says:

The petitioners had this and other dangers in view when they said:

The effect of the ordinance is to deprive the Catholic separate schools of that character which differentiates them from public or Protestant schools—

There it is again. He is not afraid to mention the word,

—and to leave them Catholic separate schools in name only, and such it is submitted is its obviously necessary effect.

This is not said in an ungenerous spirit. Amongst our people an English school is a Protestant school. They understand it in that way; not in the improper sense of the word at all. We do not use the word 'Protestant' in a bad sense because there are many good Protestants as there are good Catholics. The Archbishop uses that word only in that sense. Again, the Archbishop says:

In spite of all these protestations this ordinance in the dispositions which concerned us had and could have but one object, that is, the abolition of all distinct character of our schools. Thanks to that ordinance and to the regulations of the council of public instruction which followed, this end has been to-day practically attained. Nothing essential now distinguishes the Catholic schools from the Protestant schools but the designation, now ironical, of separate schools.

Now this is Archbishop Taché who says that and it has not been denied. On the contrary it is brought to the attention of the House by the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) to show why he supported the amendment of the Prime Minister after resigning on account of the Bill as it was first brought down. He wants to show why he came back and says that he is supporting to-day by the amendment of the Prime Minister a system of schools which is in fact a system of national schools and to prove it he places on 'Hansard' the words of a man whose utterances should have a great deal of weight with those who are in favour of separate schools. Archbishop Taché said:

Nothing essential now distinguishes the Catholic schools from Protestant schools but the designation, now ironical, of separate schools.

Then Judge Rouleau speaks in the same line. Then what does the hon. member for Brandon say: