

schools at the close of the school day. That is a right which is given to them by the Northwest government, that is a right which they have under the Northwest ordinances to-day. These ordinances passed the legislature, I believe, with an almost unanimous vote, they have been in force since 1892, and they have worked to the satisfaction of Protestant and Catholic alike, and all that this parliament is asked to do is to confirm and continue these laws which have worked so satisfactorily to our people in the west. That this system is the best for the west is beyond question. On that point we have the most eloquent testimony. We have the fact that it was established by the Northwest government, that it embodies the united wisdom of the Northwest legislature and that it has met with the approval of the Northwest people. We have also the fact that Mr. Haultain states that if he were made dictator to-morrow he would not change it. If further evidence were required, Mr. Speaker, you have not only the testimony of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House from the Northwest who are supporting the Bill, but you have the eloquent and the honest testimony of the member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lake) who in his able speech the other night used these words:

After nearly twenty-two 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.

And in giving utterance to that sentiment I believe the hon. member for Qu'Appelle was voicing the sentiments of ninety-nine per cent of the public men of the Northwest. It cannot be doubted by anyone who is at all conversant with affairs in the west that the present school system is the best suited to our needs and if that is so why not continue it? Why not give to the west that which every one says is best for the west? The member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lake) has complained that hon. gentlemen on this side were misrepresenting the position of those who are opposing the Bill when it was suggested that they wished to repeal the present system, and the hon. gentleman intimated that they did not wish to repeal the present law.

Mr. LAKE. I think the hon. gentleman is misrepresenting my intentions. I stated that the public school system as at present administered, was the best suited. Of course I stated later on that I had strong objection to the separate schools.

Mr. LAMONT. I have quoted the words exactly as they appear in 'Hansard.' Mr. Speaker, I have tried to define the exact position of the opponents of this Bill, and if I have understood their arguments the position they take is this: They say that they have no objection to the new provincial government enacting that the present law with the separate schools as included therein should

be made the law of the provinces, but that this parliament must not so enact it. If that is their true position what is the difference between the hon. gentlemen opposite who are opposing the Bill, as far as the educational clauses are concerned, and hon. gentleman on this side? We say that the present law is the best. Hon. gentlemen opposite admit that. We say that the law has worked to the satisfaction of Protestants and Catholics, Liberals and Conservatives alike. They admit that that is true, but they want to force the minority to accept the right to give their children education in the schools as a concession from the Protestant majority in the new provinces and not to claim it as a matter of right from this parliament. They say, and they have said over and over again—cannot you trust the majority? But I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, as was most forcibly stated by the hon. member for West Assiniboia (Mr. Scott) the other night, and I think that his words should be repeated: That is not a question that can be asked of the Protestant majority; that is a question that must be asked by the Roman Catholic minority, and the Roman Catholic minority not only on this side of the House, but also on the other side of the House, have answered that question with no uncertain sound.

If I am right in believing it is the policy of hon. gentlemen opposite to make the minority accept the right to have their children given religious instruction in any school as a concession from the Protestant majority in the new provinces, I wish to say that I do not think that is the desire of the Protestants of the Northwest. I believe that it is the desire of a large number of both Protestants and Catholics in the Northwest Territories that this school question should be settled right here in Ottawa and should not be thrust into the arena of provincial politics with all its strife and bitterness during the first years of our provincial life. I think that the sentiment expressed in a letter received from the west a short time ago expresses the desire of a very large majority of our people, when the writer used these words:

For God's sake settle the school question at Ottawa, and don't let us have a school fight on in the province for the next five years.

Educational laws in Canada have always had to be considered very carefully and calmly. Since these Bills were introduced there has been great agitation throughout certain portions of the country in reference to them. But I am very happy to be able to inform this House that that agitation has not prevailed in the district I have the honour to represent. In my district there are both Roman Catholics and Protestants. In the city of Prince Albert where I live we have a Roman Catholic separate school, and in Duck Lake forty miles distant we have a Protestant