

adopted, notwithstanding what has been said by the hon. member for Welland and other hon. gentlemen who have criticised that amendment—I say if the amendment of the leader of the opposition is carried into effect, the minorities in the Northwest provinces will get absolute and entire justice.

These hon. gentlemen want more than justice. Whether the constitution gives them the right or not they want these schools established in the Northwest. My learned and genial friend from Three Rivers—and I am sorry not to see him in the House—used the stock argument of hon. gentlemen from the province of Quebec in saying that the Catholic minority had rights in these Territories because years and years ago their missionaries discovered that country. All honour to those reverend gentlemen who entered that great Northwest in the early days. They had much to contend with and we honour the work they did there, but these hon. gentlemen invariably laid down the rule that they are entitled to these rights because the country forsooth was discovered by these missionaries. I am told by an hon. member who comes from the Northwest that they never discovered the territory which will form these Northwest provinces. They never got within 300 miles of these provinces. Therefore, that claim to the right of separate schools in that country, falls absolutely to the ground. But, what I have noticed in the speeches of these hon. gentlemen is that they entirely ignore the constitutional point. They do not desire to have just what the constitution gives them, but they want a little more than the constitution gives them. I would present for the information of these hon. gentlemen what the hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Lemieux) said in the remarks which he made upon these Bills before the House. I am glad that I have this statement from perhaps the only really eminent lawyer who has spoken on that side of the House besides the hon. ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton). This is what the hon. Solicitor General said as reported at page 3458 of 'Hansard':

It is in the light of our constitution that the question must be examined. To look at it from any other point of view is to err and to quibble. According to the British North America Act has the minority in the Northwest Territories any rights to a system of separate schools? That is, in my judgment, the only question to be decided.

Now, the hon. Solicitor General agrees entirely with my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden). He does not agree with his constitutional argument altogether, but there is this statement of the Solicitor General, who is a member of the government, and it ought to have considerable weight emanating from such a source, that the whole question must be a constitutional question and in

his judgment that is the only question to be decided. But, the way the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) and other hon. gentlemen who have spoken skate over that constitutional question is a marvel to me. I do not pretend to be capable of entering into the argument of the constitutional question, but it reminds me a great deal of a story I once heard of an American, a breezy westerner, who came down to see his member of congress at Washington. He had in his mind a Bill of tremendous importance of some kind or other, and he thought that he had only to speak to his member about it to get it through the House. But, on presenting it to his member, this is what the latter said to him: Well, my dear fellow that is contrary to the constitution; it cannot be done, to which the westerner made reply: To the devil with the constitution; what is the American constitution between friends! That is about the attitude of these hon. gentlemen in giving to the Catholic minority in the western provinces, not absolute justice, but more than they are entitled to. What does the constitution amount to so long as they can deal out what they consider to be fair-play, but what we consider is a little beyond fair play? There is no one in this House who will not accord to the Catholic minority such absolute fair-play as they are entitled to under the constitution. I do not believe there is a man on this side who would not be willing to give that fair-play, and when these questions are fraught with so much doubt and so much difficulty there is only one course, as I shall state presently, to be adopted in order to satisfy the public mind. The debate so far has been a very exhaustive one, and the arguments pro and con have been so exhaustive that it is almost impossible for any member addressing the House at this late stage of the debate to say anything new or anything of interest to the country, but I simply desire to impress upon the members of the House this view in regard to the constitution. The right hon. leader of the government (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) in introducing these Bills stated that he was going to give absolute autonomy to the Northwest provinces. I have already stated what that autonomy amounts to where these reservations are made and I desire simply to call the attention of the House to the fact that the right hon. gentleman, in introducing his Bills, stated distinctly that he stood upon the rock of the constitution. He agrees thus far with the hon. Solicitor General! and with my hon. friend the leader of the opposition. But, Sir, the arguments that he brought forward in regard to his standing on the rock of the constitution were not, in my view, very strong, and after the speech of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition, which, I must say, appealed to every hon. member who will express his