

proposed to this measure. Shall I say the amendment of the leader of the opposition? I cannot even say that; I must describe it as the amendment of the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. R. L. Borden). He has, for the time at least, abdicated his functions as the leader of his party and he has left his followers to go it as they please, and they have been going it as they please upon this question. I do not mean the hon. gentleman (Mr. R. L. Borden) any disrespect in describing him as the hon. member for Carleton and not as the leader of the opposition. I do so because he himself stated distinctly that he was simply speaking his own personal and private views on this question, leaving his followers to work out their own salvation for themselves. He proposes in his amendment:

That upon the establishment of a province in the Northwest of Canada as provided in Bill 69, the legislature of that province, subject to and in accordance with the provisions of the British North America Act, 1867 to 1868, is entitled to and should enjoy full powers of provincial self-government.

That is his proposition and he says he stands upon the constitution. It is possible to conceive sometimes of a person declaring himself to stand upon the constitution when in point of fact he is only sheltering himself behind the constitution. If the hon. gentleman means that the constitution shall prevail I would like to ask why he introduces this variation, this qualification to his declaration that the constitution of the country shall govern? Why has he undertaken to qualify the operation of the constitution either by adding to it or by diminishing its force, by reason of adding the words:

Including the power to exclusively make laws in relation to education.

It is impossible for any province in this Dominion to have absolute and exclusive right to legislate upon the subject of education; the provinces must legislate upon that subject within the four corners of the British North America Act, and section 93 of that Act ties their hands, creates their powers and limits their functions with respect to legislation upon that subject. Therefore, the two propositions: of bringing the provinces in under section 93 and its subsections, and at the same time giving them absolute and unlimited power to legislate in respect to education are hostile propositions in themselves and cannot go together. The new provinces should remain under the provisions of the British North America Act; that means all its provisions, every one of them, section 93 with its subsections as well as all the other sections. And if they do, it is impossible under the conditions and terms of the subsections for the province to have this absolute right which the hon. member for Carleton proposed to give them by the final clause of his amendment. Does he mean that the province shall come in, and

MR. LAURENCE.

ipso facto the British North America Act shall apply to it as at the time when it comes in on the first day of July next. If so, his proposition as effectually perpetuates and continues the present system of education there, as does the government measure. If he means that these Territories came into the union in 1870 when they had absolutely no system of education whatever, then indeed, Sir, the minority under his proposition is absolutely left to the mercy of the majority who may give them no rights and no concessions. He ought to be able to take either the one position or the other. It is a poor position to say: 'I am neither in favour of separate schools nor against them.' If his proposition means anything, in view of the question that is being agitated in this country, in view of the discussion that is going on in this parliament, he ought to be able to interpret his amendment and tell the members of this House and the country what it really signifies—whether it means an absolute denial to the minority in the Territories of any of the rights they now possess, or whether it means, as I think it does, that they shall come in with identically the system they have to-day; or is it a mere jingle of phrases intended to catch the extremists who are opposed to any and all concessions to the minority on the one hand while the boast of adherence to the constitution is supposed to be acceptable to everybody else? The hon. gentleman says he stands on the rock of the constitution. I rather think, Sir, that for lack of courage to take a stand on this question, he is sheltering himself and concealing himself behind the constitution. Now, Sir, if the amendment of the hon. leader of the opposition prevailed, I submit to the reasonable judgment of the House, would there be any certainty about it? Can any man on either side of this House tell me to-day what would be the effect of the passage of his resolution upon the existing educational system of that country? Would that system remain as it is, or would the people have absolute freedom to wipe it out or to continue it as they pleased? He has not told us, and no man behind him ventures to tell us, what that amendment means. I say it is so uncertain as to be utterly unworthy of consideration.

That is my view, Mr. Speaker, of the amendment proposed by my hon. friend the member for Carleton. I am indeed not surprised that there should be disagreement among the members on his own side of the House as to what it signifies. One person takes one view of it, another another. I am not surprised that they cannot agree upon it. Perhaps now that I have invited a fair and square interpretation of that amendment, we may possibly have an attempt to interpret it from some person who may yet speak.

Now, I have described the system of education prevailing in the Northwest Terri-