

Mr. BERGERON. Yes, if they wish it. But it is left to the discretion—

Mr. FIELDING. Yes—no coercion.

Mr. BERGERON. But if my hon. friend (Mr. Fielding) and I were boys together in such a school, the mere fact of the Lord's Prayer being used would not make it seem to me anything but a non-sectarian school. And the use of the Lord's Prayer is only permissive.

Mr. CAMPBELL. If my hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron) will allow me, I can tell him that in the province of Ontario there are many public schools that are attended entirely by Catholic children.

Mr. BERGERON. I do not doubt it; nor do I doubt that it is a good thing. Let me explain, so that my hon. friends and I may understand one another. Amongst our people in the province of Ontario—I have heard it often in electioneering—when they speak of the public schools they call them 'les écoles Protestantes.' So, as I have been accustomed to think of it, the word 'Protestant' in that connection does not mean the same as it means, perhaps, to the Minister of Finance or my hon. friend from Cape Breton. I am sure they will make allowance for my mode of expression. The hon. gentleman (Mr. A. Johnston) does not wish me to speak in French, I suppose?

Mr. A. JOHNSTON. No.

Mr. BERGERON. I have been quoting the speech of the Minister of Finance. I followed him with great care as he spoke. And I think I am right in saying that he sought to explain what had brought him back to the fold; and the reason was that these schools were, as a matter of fact, public schools.

Then there is a further provision that all schools may be opened with the reciting of the Lord's Prayer.

It is permissible.

Does anybody object to that? I hope not. . . . I want the House to consider seriously, I submit the proposition again, that if it be true, as I say, and I believe I am correct beyond the power of contradiction, that from the moment that the school opens in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon there is no difference between a separate school and a free national school—

Mr. LEMIEUX. What do they do after half-past three?

Mr. BERGERON. They go out and play. My hon. friend knows very well that if he went to one of these schools, after half-past three, he would go out and play, he would not attend religious instruction.

Mr. LEMIEUX. I think perhaps my hon. friend could not recite the Lord's Prayer at the opening of the school.

Mr. BERGERON. I have said it here in the chair very often before my hon. friend became a member of this House.

—and if the only point of difference between them is that half hour of religious instruction, is there enough in it to quarrel about?

The hon. the Minister of Finance is making apologies because, forsooth, he says:

—and if the only point of difference between them is that half hour of religious instruction, is there enough in it to quarrel about, and to have public meetings and agitation throughout the length and breadth of this land?

No, not for hon. gentlemen who are in favour of separate schools, but there is enough in it for those who want to keep schools from the minority in these provinces. Referring to those who are agitating against separate schools and who are not in favour of doing anything at all, so far as schools are concerned, in granting autonomy to the provinces, the Finance Minister says:

When they discover, as they will, in the light of the debate which will take place in this House now and in the next few days, when the people of Canada shall learn that we have in the far west to-day a system which is practically a national school system, and that the only point of difference between us is with respect to that small matter of a half hour of religious instruction, I think the great mass of the Protestant people of Canada will say that they regret that there has been any agitation on the subject.

Well, I am not talking for those who are in favour of public schools when I call the attention of the House to these views. I want this speech to be translated and to go through the province of Quebec because my hon. friends who are from that province will go back to the people and say: We voted against the amendment of the hon. leader of the opposition, we were opposed to the amendment the object of which was to keep the minority out of their schools; we voted for the party that has at its head the men who want to render justice to the minority; we voted for the motion of the right hon. leader of the government. That is why the hon. Minister of Finance has said that these schools to all intents and purposes are national, non-sectarian schools. The Minister of Finance has said something in another place to which I wish to call the attention of the House. I cannot find it in 'Hansard' but it is reported to me by another hon. member:

I believe that the people of the Dominion to-day are not going to have their minds engaged with an elaborate analysis of constitutional questions, which nine out of ten of them will never read, and which the whole ten will fail to understand.

Not very complimentary to the whole crowd.