

should be maintained and guaranteed in future to the minority in the provinces. That is simply carrying out the principles of the British North America Act. In this case we have tried to so draft the educational clause that there shall be no question in the future as to what it means; that there shall be no room for dispute, for litigation or for doubt on the part of the people of these two new provinces. I believe, Sir, that in the preciseness of the language of the disputed clauses we have accomplished what the framers of the Manitoba Act failed to accomplish. I believe that in the history of the new provinces no agitation will arise on the question of education, and that we will have accomplished the most laudable object of settling for ever this question in that country.

Mr. SPROULE. If lawyers differ so much regarding the interpretation of the new clause, is it a matter of wonder that people outside will still differ?

Mr. FISHER. Lawyers have differed as to the constitutional right of this parliament to pass this clause, but my hon. friend is not correct in saying that they differ as to the construction of the clause.

Mr. SPROULE. They differ on their interpretation of what the new clause really means.

Mr. FISHER. My hon. friend (Mr. Sproule) has learned something from this debate which I have not learned. I do not know that there is any doubt as to what the clause as amended in the Bill means, and I do not believe that if this Bill becomes law there will be any question in the future as to the rights under which the minority will live in the new provinces. Provincial rights we give to the provinces, with a reserve—a reserve for the purpose of safeguarding the rights of minorities. In the province of Quebec, at confederation, the Protestant minority was a pretty strong minority. We held a much stronger position numerically than we do to-day. It was important for us then to be given a certain protection, certain safeguards, certain guarantees for the continuance of our rights. As we are becoming weaker numerically in that province, the guarantee and safeguard thus accorded to us becomes more and more important; and if, to-day in these new provinces the Catholic minority is weak numerically, and weak perhaps in other ways, it is all the more important that they should be given a guarantee of those rights and privileges which they guard so jealously and value so highly. The weaker the minority is, the more important it is that a guarantee should be given to it.

Sir, I am surprised that hon. gentlemen opposite, that any section of the Protestant people of this country, should hesitate or doubt in this regard. Perhaps I ought

Mr. FISHER.

not to be surprised that the Tory party and those imbued with Tory principles, should have this feeling, that they should want to ignore the rights of a minority, the rights of a weaker people in the country. This, unfortunately, has been the history of Toryism through generations and through centuries. It has always been advancing the view of the stronger controlling and ruling the weaker, without regard for the feelings, desires or privileges of the weaker. It was the old principle of autocracy; it was the old principle of the divine right of kings, when the common people were ignored, and the Tories rallied round the king and held up his hands. A little later on in the history of the world the Tory party were the party of an oligarchy, when the few, the favoured few, had control over the rights of the many. We had a specimen of that in Canada in our early history, in the history of the family compact.

Since then we have gone a little further. These older struggles have disappeared with the assertion of the larger rights of the many; but we find the Tories now wedded to the idea of the right of the majority, the absolute right of that majority, which they say demands that in Canada there shall be no separate schools, and that the Catholic people of this country shall not be given consideration for their cherished principles and cherished feelings. Sir, I do not wonder at this. We Liberals believe that the majority should rule; but we believe that the majority should rule with full consideration for the rights, the feelings and the privileges of the minority. That is the essential difference between the principles of Tories and the principles of Liberals. Their principle entails a caste to rule by force over the weaker. Our principle is to so rule through the majority that the minority may be contented, happy, and in sympathy with the majority—not in antagonism to it, and not feeling discontented or ill-used. Sir, I cannot do better than here quote a word or two from a great English statesman, the present leader of the government of England, as to the rights of minorities. Mr. Balfour was writing a letter in answer to a pamphlet which had been issued in regard to the school question there, and he said this of the writer of that pamphlet:

His constitutional studies have apparently convinced him that in an assembly where the majority govern, a dissentient minority is a negligible quantity. Were this theory sound, what an arcadian existence would be that of the leader of the House of Commons. But in truth, the theory is absurd.

Yes, Sir, I believe that the theory that the minority can be neglected, that they are a negligible quantity, is absurd, contrary to good morals and contrary to the interest of the state. Sir, I am glad to