

149. No person shall be engaged, appointed, employed or retained as teacher in any school unless he holds a valid certificate of qualification issued under the regulations of the department.

In other words, all schools must be conducted in the same way. All the teachers must be equally competent, all the text books and teaching must be the same in all the schools, and all the schools must be subject to government supervision. Religious instruction is, however, allowed for one-half hour of whatever kind the board of each school may decide. Now, Mr. Speaker, these rights for minorities have been in force, in much the same form, for many years, and thousands of people have settled in the Northwest relying on them. I understand they have been perfectly satisfactory to the people of the Northwest, and no doubt would be continued in the new provinces, were the matter left entirely to them. Personally, I believe it would be better to have all our children educated together, as they would learn to know each other better and perhaps make better citizens. But I have always lived in a mixed community such as we have in Ottawa, and I consider that the rights and feelings of every class of people should be respected, and that it would be impossible to carry on our government on any other basis in a country of varied races and religions such as Canada possesses. I might add, Sir, that although the county I have the honour to represent is composed of every class, creed and nationality, I have not received a single letter or petition urging on me to take any particular course regarding this question, and I think I may, without laying myself open to a charge of undue conceit, consider this a cause of pardonable pride on my part as showing that the people of Argenteuil are willing to trust me in this matter. If we have any right to legislate at all on the subject, I am sure that none of my Protestant friends would object to our continuing in the Northwest the very moderate rights of education which the Roman Catholic minority now has there and has had for so many years.

By their speeches, hon. gentlemen opposite are trying to convince the people that the Conservatives are against the separate school system as it at present exists in the Northwest. But, Sir, no member of the opposition has taken any such position.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. PERLEY. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition showed in a masterly argument, from a constitutional and legal point of view, that this parliament should not deal with the question, but nothing that he said could in any way be construed into an objection to separate schools. We have had from the hon. Minister of Justice and many

other lawyers a different view on the constitutional question from that taken by my hon. leader. According to some legal authorities, the power to legislate regarding education lies with us only, and according to others we are bound by the constitution to provide for a system of education. I myself believe in provincial rights, but in this case the question is not one of provincial rights, as there are yet no province in the Northwest, but of the legal interpretation of the British North America Act, and on that point no one can tell which lawyer is right and what view the Privy Council may take.

While I think that the educational clause as now drafted is fair and equitable, I repeat that, in my opinion, it would be better not to go on with the Bill now but let the government find out first where we stand and what our powers really are before we attempt to legislate.

It seems to me that the government is very much to blame for the hasty and ill considered way in which this measure was brought before the House and the country. The right hon. Prime Minister brought in this Bill on the 21st of February, and the greater part of his speech was an elaborate argument in favour of separate schools, and was of such a nature as to arouse a storm throughout the country on this question, and to make men of strong Protestant views believe there must be something very objectionable in the Bill. You must remember, Mr. Speaker, that none of us had seen the Bill when the right hon. Prime Minister presented it for its first reading, and still his speech produced in my mind the impression that he expected the measure to be strongly objected to by the Protestants of this country. That is exactly what happened. Petitions began to pour in at once, and a few days afterwards the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) resigned his office. After that, a whole month elapsed before the modified education clause was brought in by the government, and this agitation throughout the country kept on growing. I believe the storm of disapproval would never have arisen if the right hon. Prime Minister had consulted with his colleagues and his followers beforehand and had provided, in the first instance, simply for schools as they exist at present in the Northwest. I have no doubt that the people will place on the shoulders of the government, where it properly belongs, the blame for the unfortunate agitation on this question that has swept over the country.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE moved the adjournment of the debate.

Motion agreed to.

On motion of Mr. Fielding, House adjourned at 11.40 p.m.