

Prior to the reading of the Bill every one I spoke to was perfectly agreeable and satisfied, so long as the present school law was not changed.

Another gentleman from Yellow Grass, for many years a school teacher :

First let me say that the provisions of the Autonomy Bill were better than I expected from a financial standpoint. I must express my satisfaction with the terms secured by the Northwest. The result is all that could have been expected. As regards the educational clauses, I am prepared to accept the old law. I am not competent to judge of how far the proposed clauses exceed the clauses in the Northwest Territories Act, but where they do I believe Sifton and others are justified in opposing them. But I prefer that this question as an issue be removed from the provincial field. So long as the assembly retains control and enforces uniformity of teachers' qualifications, books, curricula and inspection, we have nothing to dread from the 'narrow and illiterate' separate school products. In fact I feel that we lose sight of our main privilege that we may always, when we so desire, act in unity and harmony with our Catholic neighbours, and my experience with the Catholic laity is that they will meet us half way.

I cannot but commend the unselfish interest of the Toronto 'News,' Sam. Hughes and others in our education. As for the position taken by Sifton, I hope he is prepared to agree to the re-enactment of the old law. I could not follow him further than that. I do not think there would be any difficulty in justifying before the electorate an adherence to the Northwest Territories Act. To so many of us the matter does not appeal, as the Catholic population in most settlements is so small as to have no power ; in other settlements so largely in the majority that the question is unimportant. In no case have I known of a duplication of schools when not required. Considered on its merits from a practical view-point and leaving sentiment aside the question is unimportant so long as uniformity is maintained in the course of studies and general efficiency.

I think my hon. friend referred to a meeting held at Medicine Hat where some resolutions were adopted. A gentlemen writing from Medicine Hat says :

You will get a copy of them, but don't think they express the true opinion of the people of Medicine Hat or even of the meeting, for they don't.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we are justified in concluding that these measures in all respects are eminently satisfactory to the people who are mainly concerned. I promised to give the hon. member for East Grey some further information in regard to petitions. I believe it is a fact as I have stated, that the majority of the signatures in the Northwest Territories to those petitions against this legislation, were given against the interpretation placed upon the original section 16, either that or they were given under an absolute misapprehension. A gentleman writes me from Moosejaw :

Moosejaw, N.W.T.,
March 20, 1905.

Walter Scott, Esq., M.P.,
Ottawa.

Dear Sir,—I take the liberty to write you for the purpose of finding out a little more than I know at present concerning the school question. Now, Sir, I am an Orangeman ; in fact I hold the position of master in our lodge. I have already signed a petition against the government's imposing a separate school law upon the two new provinces. But this was before I stopped to consider the matter carefully. I read a letter written by you to the Maple Creek Orange lodge secretary, which puts a different light on the subject. If this is straight, which I have every reason to believe it is, we are harping about a thing which has been in our midst for years and not a new thing at all as has been represented to us here. . . . If you have time I want you to answer and let me know in brief the real meaning of the situation in this separate school matter.

I believe that expression represents the views of most of the people who have been signing these protests and petitions. I believe that practically everybody in the Territories, ninety-nine people out of a hundred, would prefer to have these schools continued in the same way as they have been carried on for the last fourteen years.

Mr. SPROULE. In reply to that statement, may I ask the hon. gentleman this question : I understood him to say that these people were directing their attention to the original clause 16 and were not aware of the modification, or otherwise they would be satisfied. Is it not a fact that most of the petitions only expressed the hope that the government would not, by any enactment or otherwise interfere with the freedom of the provinces in legislating in regard to education ?

Mr. SCOTT. I venture to say that every one of these petitions originated in Ontario.

Mr. SPROULE. That is about as nearly correct as the other statement.

Mr. SCOTT. I venture to state again that most of the people who signed these petitions will later on express themselves as entirely satisfied with the school constitution. I say again that the proposition in the Bills is not a compromise to me at all. It is purely and exactly what I myself, and I believe the majority of the members from the Northwest Territories, wanted placed in the Bills. We have in the Northwest Territories in this very delicate and difficult matter of religion in connection with education reached a solution which has been in effect for fourteen years, which has no superior in any province of Canada, not excluding the province of Manitoba, not excluding the province of Nova Scotia or any other province. We have the most satisfactory solution of this difficult subject that is to be found anywhere in Canada, and why should we take away the advantages