

tories. It is manifestly clear that the government propose to continue it. But it will be said: No matter how good a system it is, no matter how perfect a system it is, no matter if it be impossible to improve upon it, why compel the people of those provinces to retain it for ever? Why tie their hands and prevent them uprooting it, or deprive them of the privilege of giving themselves a worse system if they want it? Why not leave them free even to change it for the worse if they wish to do so? Well, Sir, I think there are substantial reasons why we should not do that. Any man who is familiar with the history of this question in this country would, I think, pause before permitting this troublesome question to be fought out in the legislatures of the Northwest Territories. Good institutions, good laws, good systems cannot be made too stable and enduring. Permanency settles this disquieting subject for ever. Permanency removes an irritating and dangerous question from politics. Permanency in this case prevents disturbance if the relative strength of the majority and the minority should at some time in the future of that country be reversed. Then I fancy I hear a different song being sung by the persons who are clamouring against this legislation to-day. If perchance the majority and the minority existing to-day in that country should change, the one taking the place of the other, better is it I say, a thousand times that this educational system should be crystallized into an Act of parliament which will give it the element of permanency and settle this question for ever. It gives the west a chance to grow and prosper, and to prepare to receive the tens and hundreds of thousands of people who are trooping westward to settle in that country. Besides the thousands who are coming from abroad, there are multitudes of young men from our eastern provinces wending their way to make their homes there. To quote the language of the poet Whittier:

We cross the prairies as of old
The pilgrims crossed the sea,
To make the west as they the east
The homestead of the free.

Now, Sir, I must hasten to a conclusion, for I fear I am trespassing too long on the patience of the House.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Go on.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Might I ask the hon. gentleman a question? Would he be good enough to give us the next stanza of that same poem respecting the public schools?

Mr. LAURENCE. I do not remember it; I am not able to do it, but the hon. member is quite at liberty to give it. Before I take my seat, I want to read a quotation from the Montreal 'Witness,' though I do so at the risk of reading something that has already, some portion of it at any rate, been read to the House. I regard this paper as a

fairly strenuous upholder of Protestantism in season and out of season. I do not think it is illiberal in its views, but I think it is fairly reasonable and sensible on most public questions. In its issue of the 11th of April it says:

What is curious is that, while every one feels that repugnance to the very principle of separate schools is the real source of the feeling against the education clauses of the constitutions of the new provinces, all those who have expressed themselves strongly on the subject, whether public bodies, passing resolutions, or orators, or newspapers, have had an instinctive unwillingness to allege this. In every case the fight is made upon provincial rights. Even the 'Globe' has set interference with provincial rights as the danger which threatens the country. This mode of arguing has its weak side. The strength of Canada does not lie in provincial separateness, but in national solidarity; and this universal shouting for provincial rights as paramount, and this speaking of the national government as an outside power which has no business with local affairs, is, nationally speaking, a very bad sign. It is not hard to understand the strength of provincialism in Ontario, whose whole history has been an effort to get free from the adjoining province, which at one time had too powerful a sway over her.

But it always seems strange to us when this cry is echoed among the minority in Quebec, which has everything to lose by it. The declaration that education is absolutely a matter for the individual province, and that any national stipulation with regard to it is an outrage, sounds very strange coming from people who would not submit for a moment to such a system of schools as the majority in their own province would consider ideal. When asked if they would so submit, they say with surprise, 'Why, that is a totally different thing, the Quebec system would be sectarian, while the common school system should be so carried on as to offend no religion.' They do not see that this is begging the question. Of course the two ideals are very different. If it were not so, there would be none of this trouble. But just as strong as is our objection to the clerical school for our children, so strong is the objection of the Roman Catholic for the non-clerical school. People may say they do not believe this; that many Roman Catholics in their hearts prefer the non-sectarian school. This is not to the purpose; they say they do not hold these conscientious objections, and who but themselves can say what they believe? When they cease to prefer separate schools they will presumably have none. We may say it is only the priests who want the separate schools, but our system of government is based on persuasion, and, if they can persuade the people more than we can, we have to accept the declarations of our fellow citizens as to what they really do want.

In conclusion, I merely wish to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have no hope whatever that this statement of my views will influence any member of this House. But they furnish to me satisfactory reasons for supporting the Bill introduced by the Prime Minister, and they are views which, I am confident, will be accepted with approval by a large majority of the people of the country I have the honour to represent. I am con-