

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. A reply from the government of Manitoba has been received this day and will be brought down to-morrow.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Would the right hon. gentleman have any objection to a motion passing for the printing of these documents as well as other documents in that connection which may be brought down?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. To-morrow, when I bring down the other paper, we can make a motion.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTHWEST.

House resumed adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the second reading of Bill (No. 69) to establish and provide for the government of the province of Alberta and the amendment of Mr. Borden thereto.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE (Montmagny). At this stage of the debate, Mr. Speaker, I shall not pretend to review the whole of the discussion which has taken place in this House on the Bill now before us, nor shall I attempt to deal with all the clauses in that Bill. I propose to confine my remarks to that part of the measure which has created so much sensation, not only in this House, but in the country as well. I refer to the clause dealing with education. Having listened very faithfully to the debate which is taking place, I am of the opinion that the views which have been expressed on both sides, even those most opposite to my own, have been given in good faith and with but one object in view, the betterment of this country of ours.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Hear, hear.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. The view that I take of this matter may be a very weak one, but it is held in all sincerity and frankness; and in giving expression to it I trust that I shall not say anything likely to hurt the feelings of any one. You will understand, Mr. Speaker, that it would be much easier for me to address yourself and the House in my native tongue, but as I want my words to be understood, especially by those of my hon. friends who do not enjoy the advantage of understanding the beautiful French language, I shall endeavour to use the language of the majority. And if my English is not of the first quality, I ask you, Sir, and this House, for your kind indulgence.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Your English is very good.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. I must ask you further not to forget that I have been educated in one of those very inferior schools of the province of Quebec.

If ever, Sir, there was a right well established, if ever there was a right based on justice and equity, it is the right of the Catholics of the Northwest to their separate schools. That is a right which comes to them naturally, constitutionally and politically. By virtue of natural law, it is the right of the parent to bring up his children in the way he thinks best calculated to make them good Christians and good citizens, and it is the parent who is finally responsible for the education of his children. That is so true that a simple comparison will make itself evident to hon. members opposite. Suppose, for instance, that my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) or my hon. friend from South York (Mr. W. F. Maclean) should have no children and I should have six.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. I have children.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. I am simply putting an hypothetical case for the sake of argument, but as I apparently was not very well posted regarding the capacity of my hon. friend, I shall take instead the hon. member for Victoria and Haliburton (Mr. Sam. Hughes). Suppose these hon. gentlemen had no children and I had six, does it not belong to me and not to them to decide how my children shall be educated?

Mr. SPROULE. How many have you got?

An hon. MEMBER. He is only beginning.

Mr. A. LAVERGNE. I am a French Canadian and it will be all right. Is it because my hon. friends are in the majority that they can impose on me, against my conscience, their views, and dictate to me how I shall have my children educated? The child is not the property of the state, but of his parents, and it is they who have the right to decide how he shall be brought up and to have him brought up according to the dictates of their conscience. Hence we have seen outside the organization of the state, private societies or associations such as schools. The family constitutes a private society, at the head of which is the parents, and for the protection of which public society has been established. The civil society has been instituted for the protection of natural law, not to annihilate it; and for the public society to deny the right to existence of these private societies would be to destroy its own foundation, because both derive their source in the same principle, the sociableness of mankind.

It is on that instinct of sociableness, always manifesting itself, that confederation has been established. The British North America Act defines the principles on which the different provinces have rested that principle and their agreement to it.

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