

House, though not quite so plainly expressed as it is in this communication, and as a proof of the entire ignorance and misconception under which are labouring the people who are complaining against this measure. What we are legislating for is a common school—not a church or ecclesiastical school—but a common school system to be entirely governed and controlled by the people of those provinces through their legislatures and administrations. I have received a very large number of communications, petitions and protests of various sorts in connection with this measure, from which I ask permission to read just two or three extracts. Here is a resolution which came to me from the Orangemen of Maple Creek :

That the Orangemen of Maple Creek feel it incumbent upon them to protest in the most earnest manner against any question of separate schools being established in the Territories, and, believing that the great majority of the population of the Territories are against the idea, earnestly entreat the premier of the Northwest assembly and his co-delegate at Ottawa, and also the members of the Dominion parliament for the Territories to fight the introduction of separate schools even to the refusal of provincial autonomy with that as a condition thereof.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are not proposing to introduce separate schools. What we are proposing to do is to perpetuate conditions which exist in that area at present, and which have given, and are giving, entire satisfaction to practically everybody in that country. I have a communication from an important body, the Baptist Convention of Manitoba and the Territories, the third clause of which is as follows :

This is a scheme which will provoke discord and defeat one of the main purposes of public school education, which is the unification of all classes. A confederation cannot be sound in which the elements lack the first essential of harmony.

Well, this system which we are perpetuating by the proposed legislation is one which has been in force in the Territories for fourteen years, and I have yet to learn that it has caused any discord. The first essential of harmony therefore must be in that system, or discord would have broken out under its administration at some time or other during the fourteen years it has been in force. Another petition very largely signed contains the following :

We, the undersigned citizens, respectfully urge you to use all influence you may have against the separate school clause in the Bill now before parliament.

The majority of these petitions are directed against the original clauses, which some of us, at all events, claim were not identical with those now before the House. In a petition, dated March 7th, from the Ministerial Association of Winnipeg, the second clause reads as follows :

Mr. SCOTT.

Whereas, the rights of the minority are sufficiently protected by the British North America Act in any particular case.

But we are certainly not increasing that protection by this measure. If we should let the British North America Act, section 93, apply mechanically or automatically, we would not be giving any less protection to the rights of the minorities, but would leave the matter in a position of uncertainty, and there can be no doubt that where you leave uncertainty you give opportunities to agitate, and you create, not only the possibility, but the strongest likelihood, that the first years of the new provinces, when the attention of their legislatures should be directed to more profitable things, will be misused in an agitation which my hon. friend from East Grey might take some opportunity in helping to raise for the abolition of that remnant of the separate school which does exist in the Territories.

Mr. SPROULE. I should think that the statement I made would have exonerated me from any such charge. What I asked was that the right be left with the provinces to deal with the school question as they saw fit. I did not ask that they should do away with separate schools or introduce separate schools, but be left free to deal with them as a matter pertaining to themselves, about which we are not concerned, and in which I do not propose to meddle.

Mr. SCOTT. I do not know that it will be possible for me to arrive at an exact understanding with my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule).

Mr. SPROULE. That depends on your mental capacity.

Mr. SCOTT. I would ask my hon. friend whether anybody in the Territories communicated with him in regard to this matter before he commenced communicating with the people out there ?

Mr. SPROULE. Yes, several of them.

Mr. SCOTT. I understand my hon. friend to contend that he has had no part in endeavouring to engineer an agitation in the Territories. That is a statement which I accept.

Mr. SPROULE. The hon. gentleman asked me a specific question, and I gave him a specific answer.

Mr. SCOTT. I accepted last evening the frank statement of my hon. friend that he had not written people in the Northwest Territories urging upon them that this was the time for them to get rid of their separate schools.

Mr. SPROULE. And I adhere to that still.

Mr. SCOTT. I do not know that it is of any consequence to anybody that I should pursue this matter further with my hon.