

L. P. Demers) who has just taken his seat ; and although I would be very happy to address the House in the beautiful language in which he has done, I crave the indulgence of my colleagues if I speak the language of the majority. In listening to my hon. friend I have been astonished to observe the conclusions at which he has arrived. My hon. friend has discussed only one phase of the measure now before the House, which indicates, I suppose, the great interest that is taken in the clause respecting the schools, while as a matter of fact there are other things to be considered. My hon. friend commenced his remarks by casting reflections upon those who preceded him. He endeavoured to make political party capital of the question which is now being debated in parliament. It is true, it is a political question ; but we were told, at the commencement of the discussion of this measure, that we had to stand upon very high ground, because it was a very important and very dangerous question to discuss. My hon. friend, in the beginning of his remarks referred to the educational system in the republic to the south of us ; he then spoke about the Educational Act of Manitoba ; he went on to say that this was a question of justice ; and, after speaking on the interpretation of our constitution, he concluded by saying that he would not be able, by the vote which he intends to give, to render to those who are interested in this measure, all that he would like to give them, but that he would do the best he could. My hon. friend, in speaking about the constitution, reminded me of an old saying of an American politician, that patriotism is the refuge of scoundrels. Here I am afraid we have been playing a great deal with the British North America Act. Although my right hon. friend the leader of the government stood upon the rock of the constitution when he spoke on the 21st of February, and although my hon. friend the leader of the opposition also stands on the rock of the constitution, to my mind that rock is not very solid ; and since 1896, the less we speak about the British North America Act the better. To show how little we can depend upon the rules which were laid down at the time the British North America Act was passed, my hon. friend from St. John and Iberville (Mr. Demers) said a few moments ago that you would find in that Act that in the province of Quebec there must for ever be twelve counties represented by Protestants.

Mr. L. P. DEMERS. I beg pardon. I did not say that. I said that so long as the majority of those twelve counties did not want to change the boundaries of those counties the majority of the province could not change them.

Mr. BERGERON. That is better. I thought my hon. friend said the opposite, and I was going to say that this would not

Mr. BERGERON.

amount to a great deal, as the population is changing ; and although a provision was not made for the province of Ontario, the French Canadians are conquering some counties in that province without having recourse to the British North America Act.

Now, Sir, there are other questions involved in the Bill before the House. Many speeches have been made and many things have been written since it was introduced into this House, and I would have been very glad to have heard my hon. friend speak on some of these matters. There are the creation of the two provinces, the delimitation of the provinces, the question of the lands, and the school question. It is most extraordinary that since this Bill was brought before parliament we have heard very little of the other matters ; we have heard more of the school question than of anything else. Well, Sir, I intend to say just a word or two on the other points.

With regard to the delimitation of the provinces, I would prefer to leave that to the members who are most interested. I admit at once that I do not know enough of the geography of those two provinces to say whether the delimitation made by the right hon. leader of the government is a good one or not. I may say, however, that I was satisfied to have the territory made into two provinces instead of one, although personally I would have been gratified to see the province of Manitoba enlarged.

With regard to the lands, if we were following the constitution to the letter, according to clause 109 of the British North America Act, we would have to give to the provinces the control of their public lands ; but since we do not intend to follow the British North America Act all through, I am prepared to let it go by so far as the lands are concerned, and to say that I approve of the position taken by the government. At first I was not in favour of that. My view is confirmed, not so much by the British North America Act as by the fact that we have paid a very large sum of money for those lands, and that we are spending a great deal of money every year to bring in immigrants to settle upon them, and neglecting the vacant lands in the older provinces—I refer especially to the province of Quebec. But having thought the matter over, and, I may say without any false-modesty, influenced by some of the speeches made in this House, I concluded that it would be in the best interest of Canada for this parliament to hold its hands upon those lands in the Northwest Territories. We expect to have in that country a very large population ; we are inviting people from all parts of the world to come there, and we do not choose carefully enough the immigration that is going on in. But we seem to be in a hurry to have those immense tracts of land opened up to cultivation. We do not know what spirit will in a