

Mr. J. B. BLACK (Hants). Mr. Speaker, I had intended to give a silent vote on this question; but I have found that outside of this parliament there are existent and rampant such erroneous and false ideas regarding the school clause and the class of schools now in the Territories, that I find it binding on me to state the facts as I find them, both in regard to the class of schools now in the Territories, which the school clause of the Autonomy Bill proposes to endorse and continue, and in regard to the attitude of the people in the Territories touching this legislation; and I further deem it my duty to publicly declare why I heartily support the amended clause relating to schools in the Autonomy Bill.

In 1896 I took an active part, in my own county, in opposing any interference with the public schools of Manitoba as established by the Greenway government of that province. The same principles of fair play towards the people—equal rights for all and special legislation for no class or church—as actuated me then actuate me now in giving this Bill my unqualified support. When this legislation came before the House I confess I was as ignorant of the conditions of the so-called separate schools in the Territories as are some whom I have found outside of parliament publicly teaching the people on this question. With regard to the schools in the Territories with which this Bill deals, I find that they are housed in 1,100 school-houses. Of these less than a dozen—to be exact, eleven—are occupied by the separate schools. Of these, again, two are so-called Protestant and nine are so-called Roman Catholic. I find that these 1,100 are using exactly the same text-books; are taught, every one, by normal school graduates from the government normal school; are all examined by the same government inspectors; in fact, in every way are public government schools, wholly under the government care, inspection and regulation, and none are under the control of any church or denomination. One difference only exists, and it is this: I find that in the two so-called Protestant separate schools, if a majority of parents desire it, a clergyman—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, or whatever other denomination—may come after school hours are done, after 3.30 o'clock, and may for thirty minutes give religious instruction. I find that in the nine so-called Catholic separate schools, if a majority of parents desire it, a clergyman of that faith may have the same privilege, at the same hour, and for the same length of time; and I further find that no child is obliged to remain whose parents object. This provision is in exact accord with our public school system in Nova Scotia, which we have been accustomed for many years, and justly so, to boast of as the best school system in America. With regard to religious instruction, the school law of Nova Scotia provides:

It is ordered, That in case where the parents or guardians of children in actual attendance

on any public school or department signify in writing to the trustees their conscientious objection to any portion of such devotional exercises as may be conducted therein under the sanction of the trustees, such devotional exercises shall either be so modified as not to offend the religious feelings of those so objecting, or shall be held immediately before the time fixed for the opening, or after the time fixed for the close of the daily work of the school; and no children, whose parents or guardians signify conscientious objections thereto, shall be required to be present during such devotional exercises.

I find by comparison that the schools of the Territories and the schools of Nova Scotia are practically the same. If these schools in the Territories are not free public schools, if there is not here civil and religious liberty, if there are not here equal rights for all, then I have failed in my conception of these terms. These are the kind and quality of public schools which with slight variation have been in these Territories for about thirty years. These are the kind and quality of schools which the amended clause of the Autonomy Bill seeks to perpetuate—seeks this and this only—seeks this and nothing more and nothing less. These are the kind and quality of schools which the Catholic clergy are uttering their complaint against, because they are not sectarian. These are the schools against which many Protestant preachers are hurling their anathemas, because they claim that these schools are altogether Catholic and French. Some of these tirades against the school clauses of the Autonomy Bill are, I believe, said in honesty, but in profound ignorance of the public school system of the Territories, which this Bill seeks to establish and perpetuate. These are the schools of which Mr. Haultain, the Conservative premier of the Northwest Territories said a few weeks ago: 'If I were a dictator I would not change the school system of the Territories.' These are the schools of which Mr. Greenway said—and mark it well—'If Manitoba had had such a system as is in existence in the Northwest Territories there never would have been any Manitoba school question.'

Who that remembers the long and bitter fight led by Mr. Greenway for the free public schools in Manitoba, will not give weight to these words of his, and earnest heed and thought to his wise advice on the question of the Northwest Territories' public schools. Would you hear Archbishop Langevin's sad refrain over the non-Catholic control of these schools? In a circular to his clergy, he said:

Just as we are committing to press this circular, we learn with unspeakable sorrow that the educational clause destined to be inserted in the Autonomy Bill of the two new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan will not restore us to the position we held in 1875, when the Northwest Territories were organized in virtue of the British North America Act, but that this