

illiterate, and that fact could not be disputed.

Sir, my hon. friend the Minister of Customs, speaking last night, referred to the fact that it was said that the province of Manitoba had been harsh in abolishing that system. Well, Sir, I am here to say that you cannot abolish abuses of that kind by handling people with kid gloves. I am here to say that if there is any act in my public life I am proud of, it is the fact that I was one of those who helped to abolish that system of education in Manitoba in the year 1890.

The hon. member for Edmonton, at page 3160, places himself on record as follows:

I am one of these who pin their faith unreservedly to a system of national schools, established for the purpose of educating the people of the country, of imparting to them knowledge in secular subjects. I am one of those who believe that religion can best be taught by those whose special training is the teaching of religion, that geography can be better taught by those whose special training is for the purpose of teaching geography.

Now, Sir, we have the opinion of the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) that the systems are identical. We have his view, the correctness of which I do not know, as to the efficiency of the system in Manitoba. We have also the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Greenway), in his election address in July, 1892, appealing to the people of Manitoba for a further return to office, one of the grounds which he strongly urges being that his government had abolished the dual system. I may state to the House that the hon. gentleman has not deputed me to state what his views are; we have been anxious for him to speak for himself. I find that among those supporting him on that occasion, were: Mr. Clifford Sifton of Brandon; Mr. Burrows of Dauphin; Mr. Jackson of Selkirk, and Mr. Crawford of Portage la Prairie, all of whom sit in this House to-day. If these hon. gentlemen have assigned to that system its true character, I can only take the position that nothing but absolute freedom in this matter of education can satisfy the people of the west. They should be left free to legislate in years to come and to profit by the experience of the past. If the present system proves to be satisfactory, if it can be preserved; if the time comes when it does not prove satisfactory, the people of the west desire to have reserved the right to repeal it. I desire to point out to this House that the people of that country have never had an opportunity of deciding upon that question for themselves. They differ from a colony. They are not coming into this confederation with a separate school system that they have chosen for themselves; but I believe that if this administration had trusted the people of the west any rights possessed by minorities there would have been respected. I am not here to say that that system would be abolished, if we had the power, on the second day of

July; but what I plead for on behalf of those provinces is that they be allowed to legislate in that matter as they see fit, in view of the experience they have had.

In 1875, when the Act to which so much reference has been made was passed, there were only 500 people living there; and the hon. Minister of Finance, a few evenings ago, stated that he never would be a party to the passing of an Act to override a local ordinance or local statute—that would be a gross interference with provincial rights. But to my mind there is not a very great distinction between overriding an Act in existence to-day, and picking out of our ordinance a certain portion and saying that suits us, and we will adopt it so that you cannot repeal it for all time to come. It seems to me that the one is no greater infringement or invasion than the other. The hon. Minister of Finance holds up as a model of tolerance the province of Nova Scotia, which I have no doubt is all that he claims for it; but it did not strike me that the attitude he took in passing legislation which was going to kill what it was going to create was a very tolerant attitude. I think I can say for my own constituents that they will exercise as much tolerance and give as much fair-play to the minority in that country as any class of people that can be found in Canada. If you come with me to the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains, you will find there public school boys from Eton, Harrow and Charterhouse; Cheltenham and Clifton in city of Calgary; those for whom I can claim just as much intellect and spirit of fairness as can be found in the people of Nova Scotia.

I have been surprised to hear the statement made by some people that many immigrants have come into that country on the faith of that Act of 1875, or of these ordinances existing in the Territories at present. Well, Mr. Speaker, while I believe that the people of that country are as good and as law-abiding as they are anywhere else, I am convinced that it is not the condition of the schools out there which has attracted the young men to it. What has attracted immigration is the land and the great possibilities in that country, and the settler always knows that if the educational facilities do not suit him, he is at liberty to return home again. If you will take the statements issued by the land agent giving replies to the many inquiries sent to them, you will not find in any one of them any reference to the schools, separate or otherwise, which is most convincing proof that the school question has nothing to do with the influx of settlers. Let me also point out that if people are coming into that country under misrepresentations regarding the schools, then the literature issued by the Department of the Interior must be misleading because it states