

the Roman Catholic, of the Protestant, of the Greek, of the Mormon and of every other person, can go to and receive an education that will fit them for going out into the world and meeting the great competition that people encounter to-day. I must admit that I am not familiar with the conditions in Quebec and perhaps for that reason I cannot sympathize with our Catholic friends to the extent that I should in the desire for the teaching of religion in schools. Do these gentlemen ever consider how short a period of life of a child, that is of a child of the masses—and it is the masses we are talking of here, we are not talking of the man who is worth \$100,000 or \$25,000 and can educate his children where he likes, we are talking about the poor child—do they ever consider, I say, how short a time the child of the masses has in which to gain his secular education. The child cannot start before the age of seven or eight years and generally he or she has to leave school at about fourteen or fifteen. That is not a very long time and am I asking too much when I say that there is the church and the Sunday school and the parents and that these children during the short time they are in the school for five or six days of the week should devote their time absolutely to secular education? Is that not a fair proposition to put to the citizens of this country? I would like to read you a quotation from the words of an hon. gentleman who at one time sat high in the ranks of the Liberal party, the Hon. Mr. Tarte. I am not sure that he is in the party to-day, I do not know where he is, but speaking in Montreal a couple of years ago he said:

French Canadian artisans and mechanics going over to the United States of America, were sadly handicapped when put side by side with American workers, as their education, received in church schools in Quebec, did not fit them to compete with men educated under a public school system. In large works they could seldom rise to foremen's positions for this reason.

I presume that Mr. Tarte was correctly reported in this. I have said that while I respect my Catholic friends I cannot sympathize with them when they say that they must have religion taught in the schools. In the province of Manitoba in my own town we have six schools, but we have no religion, there is no dogma taught in them, we do not even read the bible but I believe we have moral teachers. As a trustee I think that is one of the things we ask. We do not ask whether a teacher is a Catholic or Protestant. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) laid stress on the fact of the teachers of Nova Scotia being allowed to wear a certain garb. We do not ask what kind of garb they wear, we do not ask whether they are Catholic or Protestant, we simply ask that they pass a proper examination, that they shall be of good moral character, and that is all we

Mr. SCHAFFNER.

ask before we put them into our rooms to teach. Is there any objection to a system like that? I believe it has worked well and I believe further that if the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Customs will come up into Manitoba and live there for five years after having passed this Act they will come back to this parliament and ask parliament to rescind it, that the school established by it is not a good school and not in the interests of this Dominion. I believe in religion, but I believe that our Sunday schools and churches can best impart that.

We had a hot contest in Manitoba and I was surprised to hear my hon. friend from Portage la Prairie (Mr. Crawford) say that he went back into that beautiful county of Neepawa after Mr. Greenway introduced and passed this measure and was defeated. At that time out of forty members only eight members of the opposition were returned and although my hon. friend was defeated he was defeated by one of the most popular men that ever lived in the west, the late Hon. John Davidson, who had a great many friends in Neepawa.

Mr. CRAWFORD. I defeated the hon. gentleman twice before, and the only issue was the school question.

Mr. SCHAFFNER. He defeated a very good man. I say this without fear of contradiction, that no government could live in Manitoba for a week, if it gave the people any chance to express themselves, that would ever think of establishing a different school system from the one they have just now. I have often heard it said that 40 per cent of the people of this country are Roman Catholics, but I want to say that nothing like 40 per cent of the people of this country want two systems of schools, and I know what I am saying. I know that is the case with the Roman Catholics of Manitoba. The cities of Winnipeg and Brandon are the only places in which there are two systems of schools—there is not one in my constituency. In the large towns most of the Catholics go to the national schools. Since I came to Ottawa I have made it a point to inquire, I have spoken to a great many Catholics, and I have not found one man or one woman to tell me that they did not prefer the national schools, because they believed that their children got a better education to fit them for the work of life. Of course, in Quebec the circumstances are different; there they are practically of one religion and one people, although there seems to be no disposition to disturb the Protestants in their separate schools. But take the Dominion as a whole, the conditions are better adapted for national schools. I say positively that the people in the Northwest, the people in my constituency, who are French Canadians—and there are men in my constituency closely related to some of the members of the present provincial government in Quebec,