

ests at stake are the education of our children, the building up of their minds, the moulding of the community's future ideals through succeeding generations, the race sentiment, and, forthwith, public opinion is astir, swayed to and fro by conflicting elements, until the wave is breaking into this very House. From that we may judge what a superior interest is involved. And on this very account it would be specially regrettable if a portion of the people of this country were deprived of such a boon. Although a minority, although in smaller numbers, we none the less cherish those feelings which in the nature of things are so dear to men and which they are intent on transmitting to their descendants. Fortunately, and I am glad to acknowledge it, several of the fair and broad-minded English speaking members of this House have spoken in such a way as to restore confidence. I have listened to a great many arguments, some of which, in spite of my good will, I have scarcely been able to consider as offered in good faith. Two reasons have I been able to make out from all that has been said in opposition to the educational clauses of the Bill. The first is on the ground of economy. It is cheaper to build and maintain one school than two; the second is based on a desire to bring about the disappearance of religious and racial differences.

Well, I have just stated that whenever money is at stake, people are apt to be fairly broad, fairly generous, fairly liberal. Why should they not be broad, generous and liberal as well when they have an additional reason for being so—the desirability of allowing men the free enjoyment of feelings which, while harmless to outsiders, are particularly dear to them and their children? On the other hand, if it were possible, by experiments carried on simultaneously, to ascertain what separate schools will cost, and what expenditure would be involved in a refusal to grant to a numerous class of citizens, making up 41 per cent of the country's population, their right to their proportion of the public funds, to which they have contributed in like proportion, I think that economy would be found to lie in the former plan of action.

As regards the second reason, is there one hon. gentleman in this House who would venture to say that he has a right to exercise some control over the beliefs of his neighbour? Well, as a matter of fact, that is what he is trying to do when he claims control over the young mind at the very period of life where it is being moulded for all time. Is there one hon. gentleman in this House who would claim the right to substitute his views to those of a fellow-citizen whom he knows to cling to his opinions, for himself and his children, just as tenaciously as the hon. gentleman clings to his own? Is there one hon. gentleman in this House who is willing to lay down the principle that, as regards that question of education,

wherein the deepest and warmest feelings of the human soul are in play, strength should prevail in a country like Canada, which is sometimes called free? Were such a one to rise and speak in that sense, and then explain how such a claim can be made to agree with the fundamental principles of justice and liberty, I must say that I, for one, would be greatly interested. Let him stand up and down, if he can, those who would fain brand him as an egotist, a bigot and a narrow-minded citizen, and one totally blind whenever he tries to look beyond the compass of his own small person. Let him stand up, so that the country may know him, that public opinion may appreciate him and our successors judge him.

However, I must say, in justice to this House, that the principle that force should rule has not been asserted here, although the reasons set forth to hide it from sight could not leave any doubt in our minds as to its existence. As for me, the fact of my belonging to the nationality which claims redress, will not induce me to withhold, on this question, the statement of principles which I owe to my country, and especially to my electors who have honoured me with their confidence. I am in favour of separate schools, under circumstances such as exist just now in this country, when minorities insist on having them. Nor do I object to any religious denomination or racial group settled in Canada to-day, whatever its importance, having its separate schools, so long as its members are moral and peaceful, and provided they fulfil the conditions as to numbers laid down in the law of their province and recognized as reasonable by all. In the province of Quebec the minimum number of children between five and sixteen years of age required for the establishment of a separate school is twenty within a radius of five miles.

I am in favour of separate schools, because my feelings are dear to me, and I sympathize with those whose feelings are dear to them. In the near future I may have an opportunity of showing otherwise than in word my toleration and sympathy for the minorities in matters of belief and of feeling. In that respect, I am in favour of minorities, not because they are made up of French Canadians, Englishmen, Irishmen or Scotchmen, but because they are men, that is to say, beings with a heart and a soul, and consequently capable of resenting injustice and violence, as well as recognizing kindness, benevolence and fair treatment.

I have no hesitation in saying, Mr. Speaker, that did I belong to a race or a creed which represented the majority of the population, I would not leave myself open to any reproach on the part of the minority in connection with the question under discussion in this House and in this country. Did I occupy a seat in the government of a sovereign country, I would not leave myself open to reproach on the part of the