

doubtedly within the power of this parliament to repeal the Act of 1875.

What does that mean? It indicates that this has never been repealed. If so, what can that mean but that it is the law of the Northwest Territories?

Therefore, I am not claiming that there is any binding legal obligation, but I do say that we are obliged to look carefully into the circumstances under which that Act was passed; and if we find that at the time it was regarded by its friends and supporters, and parliament generally, as an Act which was passed, not only for the present but the future, that creates a moral obligation which this House may well take into consideration.

Now, if I remember the words of the right hon. Prime Minister with regard to section 16, his statement was that we were obliged by the constitution to grant what is granted under this section. But the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) says something else. He goes on and wants to show that these schools are Protestant schools. And he insists upon it.

Mr. LEMIEUX. Where does the Minister of Finance say that these are Protestant schools? Can the hon. gentleman point that out?

Mr. BERGERON. Yes, if my hon. friend will wait. I have a good deal of it to read yet. One of the things mentioned in the regulations quoted by the Minister of Finance is:

To authorize text and reference books for the use of the pupils and teachers in all schools hereinbefore mentioned, as well as such maps, globes, charts and other apparatus or equipment as may be required for giving proper instruction in such schools.

That is, the curriculum of both public and separate schools. Then he goes on:

What is there, Sir, in all this to which anybody can take exception? These details constitute the essential elements of a national school system. That system prevails to-day in the Northwest Territories, and that system we propose to continue by the legislation which we have presented in this House. Well, there is still a shadow of difference. The difference between a minority school and a majority school in the Northwest Territories is so exceedingly small that he who would attempt to make a definition of it would find himself in difficulty.

What is a public school in the Northwest Territories? Is it a Protestant school or a national school? If it is a national or Protestant, where is the difference? What does my hon. friend call a sectarian or Protestant school if not one where from the time the child goes in at nine o'clock in the morning until he goes out again at half-past three in the afternoon, he hears not one word of religion?

Mr. BERGERON.

Mr. A. JOHNSTON. What does my hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron) say? Does he designate that as a Protestant school?

Mr. BERGERON. My hon. friend (Mr. A. Johnston) ought to put that question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), for it is his speech that I am reading.

Mr. A. JOHNSTON. I ask the question in all seriousness. I am as much interested in this matter as is the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron). He has made the statement that the Minister of Finance said in the course of his observations that these were Protestant schools. As I understood the hon. minister, he made no such statement. I would like to know if the hon. gentleman can refer me to any such statement on the part of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. BERGERON. We do not need to discuss matters of that sort in connection with the points I am making. So far as I am concerned, schools in which there is not a word of religion are non-sectarian, or what I have been accustomed to hear called Protestant schools.

Mr. FIELDING. I understand the hon. gentleman said that I had called them Protestant schools.

Mr. BERGERON. I may have expressed myself that way, but what I meant was that I had inferred from what the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fielding) said that he spoke of these as Protestant schools.

Mr. FIELDING. I have not had the advantage of hearing this whole discussion, but I may say that I have never used such a statement.

Mr. BERGERON. That may be. But I have not finished what I was saying. It may be that the minister (Mr. Fielding) did not use the word 'Protestant.' But I infer from the way he treated the matter that he referred to what I have been accustomed to hear called Protestant schools. Because to me schools where you do not speak of God are Protestant schools.

Mr. FIELDING. I cannot admit that a school in which you do not speak of God is a Protestant school. I have always believed that there was a God in the Protestant religion as well as in the Roman Catholic.

Mr. BERGERON. Yes, but if you do not recognize Him, what is the use?

Mr. FIELDING. My hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron) forgets that under the school law of the Northwest Territories there is provision for recognizing the existence of God, because where the trustees so desire the school can be opened with the use of the Lord's Prayer.