

not very many hon. gentlemen opposite have taken that line in this debate, but there are some gentlemen who have seemed unable to make allowance for honest difference of opinion, or to understand that gentlemen on this side of the House may advocate national schools without inflammatory intention and without being firebrands. It has been some relief to us, that of those who have made such charges the majority are not from the province of Quebec as perhaps we might naturally have expected to find them. If we had heard some such remarks from hon. gentlemen from that province we might perhaps have made some excuse for them treating the matter somewhat hotly from their point of view. But these remarks have been rather from the members from other provinces, and I have noticed that they have come from some gentlemen on the other side of the House from whose records in the past few years we might have expected that they would have been inclined to be silent on such a subject. When I listened to some of these gentlemen casting such epithets across the floor and charging hon. gentlemen on this side with being firebrands, I was reminded of the old Jacobite toast:

'Down with the Pretender; God save the King;

But which is Pretender and which is King?

God save us all, that's a different thing.'

I do not propose, Mr. Speaker, to discuss the question of religious education. If I did so I should be disposed to deal with it not as a question of creed or race. I do not see why it should be a question of creed. The feeling in favour of religious education in the schools is not confined to any one church. In the Church of England, especially in the old land, there is a very strong feeling in favour of religious education; I venture to say there is quite as earnest and strong a feeling on that subject among the clergy of the Church of England as there is on the part of the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. There is surely a great deal to be said in favour of it. Is there anybody who will deny that even in this prosperous land and in perhaps every province of it, there are thousands upon thousands of parents utterly incompetent and unfit to give to their children teaching in the most rudimentary elements of Christianity? There are many parents who are utterly indifferent to religion, and there are others whose unfortunate circumstances prevent them doing what otherwise they might be willing to do. Well, Sir, sometimes we hear as regards the children of these parents, the rather light remark: Why not send them to the Sunday schools. But the classes of people to whom I allude are just those who will not send their children to the Sunday schools so careless and indifferent are they. Those children then cannot

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receive any religious education there, and is it to be wondered at that zealous men who believe it is their calling and duty to find the children where best they can to impart religious instruction to them, are glad to seek them in the only schools where such children can be compelled to attend. Under these circumstances it is neither just nor fair to scoff and sneer at those who feel so strongly upon this subject. But, at the same time there is a great deal to be said on the opposite side of the question and whether we are in favour of national schools or in favour of religious teaching in the schools, we surely ought to be able to discuss our difference fairly and to avoid charging each other with intolerance or bigotry because we take one side or the other.

In my opinion the question of religious education or separate schools is not at all for this parliament: the question lies, in my judgment, solely with the people of the provinces who are immediately concerned. Moreover, I agree fully with the hon. member for South Toronto, when he said that it is in the true and lasting interests of the minority that the matter should be left to the people of the new provinces. I believe that separate schools should exist by force of law only when that law emanates from the people among whom it is to be enforced. If the people themselves grant the right, let it be so and let the privilege be maintained. But if this parliament should impose such schools on the provinces, it is in human nature to resist and obstruct, and you will find that that which a free man will give of his own accord he will never grant under compulsion. I might quote on this subject the great writer, Macaulay, who has said:

There are two ways to govern a people; one by public opinion, the other by the sword.

The right hon. the Prime Minister appears to distrust the people of the west and he is forging a sword with which to coerce them. He has in this Bill, most carefully prepared, and to a great extent carefully concealed, a sword that will be more dangerous to the freedom of the people of the new provinces than ever the coercion Bill was to the people of Manitoba. I commend to the right hon. gentleman the language of his Finance Minister, showing what Catholics enjoy in Nova Scotia where there is no separate school law. The Minister of Finance told us in most glowing terms how happy were the circumstances in Nova Scotia, where Catholics and Protestants live in harmony, and without compulsion of law but exercising goodwill and freedom among themselves, have a system of separate schools far better—according to his description—than any we know of in any province in this Dominion where separate school laws exist. I would also commend to the Prime Minister