

An hon. MEMBER. Your inquiry has not gone far.

Mr. SPROULE. I am stating the facts to the best of my judgment. Do we want any better evidence than the voters' lists which were read here to-night in which in poll after poll you could not find an English name.

An hon. MEMBER. There are Irish there?

Mr. SPROULE. I looked at polling list after polling list where I could not find an English name.

Mr. OLIVER. Will the hon. gentleman mention one in which there is not an English voter?

Mr. SPROULE. It is too childish for anything to expect me to take a voters' list at which I looked to ascertain what was the complexion of the people up there, whether English or not, and be able to keep the name and the number of each sheet or polling subdivision in my head. If it is a fact, and I believe it to be a fact, that a very large percentage of these people do not understand the English language, and know little or nothing about our educational system, is that the class of people from whom you can get a fair test of the public sentiment of the people in these two provinces regarding the merits or demerits of our educational system? Had they gone to East Assiniboia or West Assiniboia I would have said it was a fair test.

Mr. OLIVER. You would rather test it in Toronto?

Mr. SPROULE. Let me say another thing. I was informed upon inquiry that there are peculiarities in the situation there which made it practically impossible to get a fair test of public opinion. I will give the information I got from people in the locality. They said: In the first place Mr. Oliver is coming back here as a minister of the Crown, as the head of the Interior Department which controls all the Crown lands in that country and whose agents have to do with the foreign element which is coming in here in large numbers, and consequently have an influence over them which no one else could have; these people are practically like wards of the government and the government have such control over them that it would be utterly impossible to get a fair test of public sentiment on any public question. In the next place, Mr. Oliver was living in the city that was made the capital of the province and they were very grateful to Mr. Oliver for getting Edmonton selected as the capital, and they would regard it as an act of ingratitude if they did not endeavour to give him an election by acclamation. In the third place, the question of the headquarters of the Grand Trunk Pacific in the Northwest was not yet decided, and Mr. Oliver was supposed to have a powerful influence with the

Mr. SPROULE.

company in determining whether the headquarters would or would not be at Edmonton, and they thought Mr. Oliver would be likely to fight in their interest. These are some of the reasons why we were told it was utterly impossible to get a fair test of public sentiment up there. Therefore it would not be the part of wisdom to put up a candidate, and especially so with the short time at our disposal. It was said that if we had time to go among the people, and through interpreters debate these public questions fairly so that these foreigners might understand the dividing line between the parties and what the policy of each party represented, then we might hope to have a good vote in that country, but otherwise we could not. That being the case we did not choose to put up a candidate because we thought it was not a fair test of what the sentiment of these two provinces was. Were we right or were we wrong?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Wrong.

Mr. SPROULE. Who says wrong?

An hon. MEMBER. You are always wrong.

Mr. SPROULE. Always wrong; well, we are at least sometimes right.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

Mr. SPROULE. Well, we are as nearly right as the hon. member who has interrupted me. Need I give him an instance of where he was not always right; if he invites it much further I will do so. In view of these things we did not think it advisable to make an effort because we had no fair chance and we could not get a fair average of expression of what was the will of the people, and because of that I say we did not desire to either waste our time or spend our means to try an election where all the odds were against us; where we had no chance whatever to test public opinion.

Mr. OLIVER. Am I right in understanding the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sproule) to speak of spending their means; surely not?

Mr. SPROULE. Yes, spending our means because you cannot travel up there without spending money.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh.

Mr. SPROULE. Not spending one dollar improperly, but it requires money to travel and carry on a campaign, and you cannot go into a country where you spend half a dollar or a dollar for every meal without spending money. In view of these facts I would not regard it as a proper thing to contest the election. There was a verdict given and the hon. member was elected by acclamation, and that is supposed to be a fair test of the sentiment of the people of these two provinces—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.