

to continue to speak French had allowed (but not without protest) the abolition of the French language in the Northwest Territories, we should be willing to-day to consent to the abolition of religious instruction in the schools. I think that my hon. friend will on reflection admit that that is a rather curious argument. Is it because the Roman Catholic French Canadians of the Northwest have been deprived of the right to teach French in their schools that they must also be deprived of the right to have religious instruction in their schools? Is it because the lamb has been shorn of half his wool, that he must be compelled to give up the rest? That is a curious sort of argument. So far as I am concerned, I have no hesitation whatever in adopting the interpretation put on section 11 by the Minister of Justice to-day. I say that under the Act of 1875 the majority in the Northwest Territories, whether Catholic or Protestant, had the right to establish their own schools as they might think fit; and that there was to all intents and purposes established by that Act in the Territories a dual system of schools, to the same extent and in the same manner that that system was established in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec before confederation and as they now then exist and are maintained. If I am right in my interpretation of section 11, it follows as a necessary corollary, that the distinction between clause 16, No. 1 and clause 16, No. 2 is very evident. It is quite plain to me, speaking as a Roman Catholic and a French Canadian, that by clause 16, No. 2 we have given up something which we certainly were entitled to under the original clause 16, No. 1 and under the Act of 1875. If the Act of 1875 is still law to-day, and I believe it is, we are entitled in the Northwest Territories to a system of separate schools as a matter of right, not merely for the purpose of giving half an hour or an hour of religious instruction, but we are entitled to the absolute control of our schools. I submit that not only parliament, but even any court of justice should give that interpretation to the Act of 1875. So far as parliament is concerned, I think we have something more to do than to give a narrow and contracted interpretation to that Act. I think it is the duty of every member of this House to inquire and find out for himself what was the intention of parliament at that time—to look at the extraneous and surrounding circumstances in order to determine what that intention was and what the interpretation should be. I do not think it should be circumscribed or narrowed down to the circumstances which exist to-day; but we should go back to the circumstances as they existed at the time the Act of 1875 was passed and interpret the law accordingly.

Mr. BELCOURT.

Mr. STOCKTON. My hon. friend who has just taken his seat has given expression to some views with respect to interpretation which have somewhat astonished me. Section 11 of the Act of 1875 says that the majority of the ratepayers of any district or portion of the Northwest Territories may establish schools. As I understand the interpretation put upon that by my hon. friend, you have to eliminate from these words 'the majority of the ratepayers,' all who cannot properly come under the denomination of Protestants or Roman Catholics; therefore Doukhobors, Jews, Gallians and Mormons would not be included in that category. I think that is the argument of my hon. friend.

Mr. BELCOURT. That is quite right.

Mr. STOCKTON. Then, if we have a district in which the people are all Jews, for instance, the parliament of this country must entirely ignore that class of people, and you cannot have any education there. Under the argument of my hon. friend you cannot institute a school system.

Mr. BELCOURT. I did not argue that. I did not say that these people were to go without education.

Mr. STOCKTON. How will they get it if they cannot establish a school system of their own?

Mr. BELCOURT. They are not entitled to schools of their own. They can get their education either in Protestant or Catholic schools.

Mr. STOCKTON. That is not the argument of my hon. friend. He said that the majority means either Protestant or Roman Catholic, and that you could not establish a public school except by a majority which should be Roman Catholic or Protestant.

Mr. BELCOURT. I did not say that.

Mr. STOCKTON. I am glad he is taking it back because he evidently did not understand exactly the force of his argument.

Mr. BELCOURT. I do not take it back. What I said was that the majority whether Catholic or Protestant, have an absolute right in the Territories to establish schools of their own, in the words of the statute, as they may think fit.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Might I ask the hon. gentleman this question? He said if you had a thousand Catholics and five hundred Protestants and two thousand Mormons, Jews and others, the thousand Catholics would be the majority, and my hon. friend said distinctly yes. He would ignore the Mormons altogether.

Mr. STOCKTON. He said they could not have any schools.