

are not called upon to express any decided opinion as to their validity.

These last words are sufficient evidence of the fact that the Catholic minority of New Brunswick might have appealed to the courts with a great chance of gaining all these privileges. This part of the judgment may become useful at some other opportunity. The hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) said that the Liberal members who supported the amendment brought in by the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) were not true to their principles. I have the greatest respect for my dear, very dear friend, the hon. member for Labelle. None in this House more sincerely admires his ability, his deep knowledge, and his telling eloquence, and it would be with timidity that I would rise in contradiction to any statement, historical or constitutional, he may make. But when my hon. friend rises in this House and says that the right hon. the leader of the government and every Catholic member of the Liberal party is a coward, I have, Mr. Chairman, as a Catholic member, a French member from New Brunswick, I have to resent such an accusation. My life has not been a life of eloquent deliverances, of famous speeches, the echoes of which may have vibrated abroad, but, my neighbours in New Brunswick in this House will be ready to corroborate my statement when I say that my life has been a life of hard work, of constant and energetic efforts for the promotion of the welfare of my French compatriots in the county of Gloucester and throughout the province of New Brunswick. None will accuse me of having at any time failed in my duty towards them as French people or as Catholics, and in the exercise of my parliamentary duty on this solemn occasion, I have to follow the voice of my conscience, refuse to be carried away by my inconsiderate feelings, and act not according to my personal wishes, but after an intelligent study of the question before us, with the ambition of translating to our co-religionists of the west, all the privileges they are entitled to by the constitution, refraining from a desire of inserting cherished favours which an appeal to judicial authorities would at once eliminate after a useless excitement of feelings. As a member of the minority in New Brunswick, I must say that we have had to make a fight to gain and hold the position that we now have. We made that fight pacifically, but we made it advantageously. I feel deeply grieved that the French and Catholic minority in the Northwest, which is as dear to me as to any one, will not be given by the constitution all the privileges that I would like to see them enjoy. But, Mr. Chairman, I do not despair for all that of the Catholic minority and the French population in the Northwest. It is no more necessary for them to despair than it was

for us of the New Brunswick minority to despair. I believe that the minority in New Brunswick are an example and should be an inspiration for the minority in Manitoba and the Northwest. Certain rights are being granted to them by the constitution, and their future is as bright as ours was. We of the minority in New Brunswick have had to work our own case. We are working it out, slowly perhaps, but surely, and during the last twenty years the French Acadian population in New Brunswick has made as great progress in popular and primary education as has the French population in any of the rural districts of Quebec.

As I have said, we have occasionally had statesmen in our province who understood the rights of minorities, and who understood that it was the duty of the rulers of a country so to legislate that every child in the country should be educated, whether he was French, Scotch or Irish. I am sure that it is with great regret that the right hon. the leader of this government cannot give to his co-religionists and compatriots in the west a greater measure of privileges, which might place them on a better footing. But we are to-day compelled to take the position—I would not call it a humiliating position, but a constitutional position—that we cannot grant to our co-religionists all the privileges that we would desire to give them. In the province of New Brunswick we enjoy certain privileges which the judges of the Supreme Court of our province considered not to have been granted by the law of the province and said privileges were maintained by the court. The constitution to-day can only grant such rights and privileges as are possessed by minorities, Catholic or Protestant, by the law of the country. That was the consideration upon which the judges of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick based their judgment.

It is not by what the board of education, superintendent, inspectors or trustees may have done or allowed to be done under the Act, nor is it from the mode in which the principles of Christianity may have been actually practically taught in one or a hundred schools which may have drawn public money under the Parish School Act, that the question in a legal view must be determined. We must look to the law as it was at the time of the union, and by that, and that alone, be governed.

The law regarding separate schools in the Northwest Territories is based on the ordinances which are brought into force by the amendment, and which accords rights and privileges to the minorities, whether Catholic or Protestant, of which they are now in the enjoyment in pursuance of their own legislation, passed by a legislature elected by the people themselves. These ordinances which are now in existence are adopted by the constitution of the new provinces, and will secure for all time to the minorities the privileges they now enjoy. I must say that if to-day we cannot give to the people of