

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK. My hon. friend—

Mr. SPROULE. The Postmaster General should be the last man in this country to interrupt me. I do not complain of his doing so, because if time would permit I could tell him a great deal of the feeling in his own constituency that he may not be aware of.

We want no rhetorical generalities, no vaporizing about justice and toleration. Here is a plain problem—Why are the Protestant farmers of the province of Quebec going away? Do men flee a province where they have no cause of complaint?

And still the hon. minister says there is no cause for complaint.

Mr. ARMAND LAVERGNE. Does my hon. friend think that the Protestants would be more apt to stay in Quebec if there were no schools?

Mr. SPROULE. I am only telling him what the Huntingdon 'Gleaner' thinks has been the result of their divided education.

I am not going to enumerate all their causes of complaint: I select one and that the one on which Sir Wilfrid makes his boast—that of schools. Farmers have told the writer, when he remonstrated with them for selling out, that they had no choice, that when the ratepayers were all of one mind in their district they had only strength enough to keep up a school, but when the curé interfered and insisted on a separate school they could not maintain one.

They could not maintain two. When they divided their forces the Protestants were so few that they could not maintain one.

The alternative was before them to see their children grow up in ignorance or go to a country where there are no separate schools. They were doing well in the province of Quebec, they did not expect to get farms of better soil, it was a wrench to their feelings to break old associations and part with old neighbours, but for the sake of their children they felt they must make the sacrifice. It is a sad truth, and one I am ashamed to set down, that in localities in the townships where Protestant parents have not left under this motive, they have become so few that they have either no schools or are able to keep one open for so short a term each year that it is of nominal service. Their children can neither read nor write, and a race of illiterates are growing up who are a reproach to Protestantism. Analyze the reports of the inspectors of schools and there are revelations of ignorance among the scattered English-speaking communities in the eastern townships and adjoining counties which, if their wealthy compatriots in Montreal realized, or our churches comprehended, would stir them to action.

There is no more saddening aspect in the condition of our province than the groups of Protestant children to be found here and there all over it destitute of the means of acquiring the elements of education, and

threatening us with a coming generation of Protestant farmers as ignorant as Russian moujiks. This is a fruit of separate schools. If we had national schools, instead of sectarian schools, no child in the province would be without opportunity to learn to read and write. Another consequence of these sectarian schools should never be lost sight of, and that is, where Protestant farmers are too few to have a school, they are taxed to support Catholic schools, which, sometimes, have as their teachers nuns or Christian Brothers. There are hundreds of Protestant farmers who are forced to support Catholic schools or sell out.

And that is no hardship to the Protestants of Quebec? Is it no cause of complaint?

Mr. O. E. TALBOT. Is the hon. gentleman aware of any instance in which an English Protestant in the province of Quebec has been forced on account of the condition of affairs to sell his farm at a sacrifice in order to permit a Roman Catholic to take his place?

Mr. SPROULE. At a sacrifice? I have never gone into that phase of the question or perhaps I could give the information.

Mr. O. E. TALBOT. He sells if he gets his price.

Mr. SPROULE. I can give the hon. gentleman some information in connection with this. I can refer him to the fact that I think in the second or third year I was in this parliament the people of Quebec came up here and petitioned the then government to give them sufficient money to take them to the maritime provinces or to the far west and what was the reason? That where there was a community of Protestants years ago, there was then only an odd one, and they had become so few and scattered that they were neither able to support separate schools nor churches, and their families must go—

Mr. ARMAND LAVERGNE. Would it be any better if they were obliged to go to a French system of national schools.

Mr. SPROULE. If it was of good standard quality I think they would be much better off.

Mr. ARMAND LAVERGNE. Well, they can go.

Mr. SPROULE. And these petitioners brought a map along showing that where there were Protestant communities years ago there were scarcely a dozen families then, and where 50 or 100 could keep up a church years ago there were then only 10 or 12 families. They said that their farms were bought out by Roman Catholics. Whenever a Protestant was willing to sell his farm there was really a premium for a Roman Catholic to purchase it.

Mr. SCOTT. Is there any compulsion in the province of Quebec to exercise what are called the minority rights?