

cussion, and no doubt he did, would doubtless be able to decide from it what the constitution is, but I am forced to say that so far as I am concerned, the more talk I have heard as to what the constitution really is the worse I am confounded. I have had no legal training, and I am not in a position to form a legal opinion, but I am able to exercise whatever intelligence is given to me. My constituents represent a fair average of the intelligence of this Dominion, and I do not claim any greater intelligence than the average elector in my constituency, and if I cannot form an opinion as to what is constitutional and what is not, then the majority of my constituents must be in the same predicament. This all tends to show that there is such division of opinion on this important question, the results of which may be likely to cause unrest and friction between different religions that it would have been far better in the interests of Canada had the government before proceeding so hastily, taken the people into their confidence and submitted this measure to them. We hear that the voice of the people is the voice of God, and that being so the government would have made no mistake had they submitted this measure to the electorate. I may say frankly, Mr. Speaker, that had the government consulted the people of Canada, I do not believe the people would have approved of this measure. There is a good old proverb which says: It is never too late to mend, and I do not think it is yet too late for the government to take the people into their confidence. I know that hon. gentlemen on the opposite side of the House would feel more comfortable individually and collectively, if they knew that they had the approval of their constituents in this matter, so that the government in the interests of their own friends should have taken the course which I now suggest. Just fancy that great Northwest country, comprising hundreds of millions of acres, being disposed of and divided and re-arranged without consulting the people. We should transact the public business as we manage our own private affairs, but in this case a most important Bill has been launched on the country without consulting the people directly interested, and that Bill will no doubt be passed by a great majority in this House. Of course it will remain to be seen whether in the end it will be approved by the people. We are told by hon. gentlemen on the other side that when the Bill passes the House, the whole question will be settled. I am afraid that the government and its supporters are living in a fool's paradise if they believe that. It is said, and I believe correctly said, that the schools at present existing in the Northwest Territories are second to none in this broad Dominion. If so, why does not this government leave the school system alone;

why do they not let that school system prevail?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. WILMOT. But not by an Act of this parliament.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. WILMOT. The people who are most directly concerned are those which should control their own educational affairs. I do not know why the people of the great Northwest should be treated by this government after such a fashion. I cannot understand why the people of the Northwest were not consulted by the government on this question. Why had not the government sufficient confidence in the people of the west to say to them: You are intelligent people, you are fit to manage you own affairs and we want your opinion on this measure. If that had been done by the government, it would have been the best course to adopt, and it would have avoided a great deal of trouble in the future.

Mr. O. E. TALBOT. Would New Brunswick say that, or the Northwest Territories themselves?

Mr. WILMOT. New Brunswick is already settled for. We are told that this is a question of constitution and not a question of schools; but I must say that while the constitutional view is one thing, the schools are a very large incident. In comparing separate schools with free schools, I have some figures which have been taken from the Statistical Year-book covering the years from 1891 to 1900, and they show the following results:

| | Average Popu- lation for 10 Years. | Average Number Convicted Yearly. | Per- centage. — 1 in every |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Separate School Provinces— | | | |
| Ontario..... | 2,148,634 | 2,594 | 827 |
| Quebec..... | 1,568,716 | 1,536 | 1,021 |
| Public School Pro- vinces— | | | |
| P. E. Island.... | 106,178 | 32 | 3,318 |
| New Brunswick.. | 326,151 | 112 | 2,900 |
| Nova Scotia.... | 454,984 | 224 | 2,075 |

I find further that Quebec sent to the penitentiary an average for the ten years of one in 10,120, Ontario one in 10,251 and the maritime provinces one in 12,667. I give these figures to show that in the provinces which have non-sectarian schools the average of morality is quite equal to and even surpasses that of the provinces which have separate schools.

Now, I will not occupy any more of the time of the House. The government can by force of numbers enact the Bill before