

Northwest Territories. The discussion has gone even farther, and it has been time and again written and said that those in this House who defend the rights of the minority are under clerical influence, are acting under the dictation of the hierarchy, whatever that may mean. What is the meaning of these insinuations? If they were uttered once or twice, if they appeared, so to speak, by accident, one would be prepared to treat them with the tolerance which must necessarily be the quality of a public man if he wishes to live. But it has been so often stated that those who in this House adopt the view which I adopt are under the domination of the clergy, that I wish at any rate for my part, to enter my protest against that insinuation. There is no foundation for that accusation, and those who make it know not of what they speak. I say, I come to this House to fulfil my duty to my country without any control over me of priest or bishop or anybody else. That control I have never admitted, and that control never existed. As a matter of fact, I venture to say, the clergy in my province do not exercise any control upon the decision of public questions and the votes which we give in this House. That control does not exist; it is a figment of the mind. And, when men take the trouble to write in newspapers—not to speak in the irritation of the moment, but to write deliberately—that those who are in my position in this House are under outside control, are, so to speak, led by extraneous influences, they are casting upon us a libel which we do not deserve. I venture to say there is not a voter in the Dominion of Canada who would be more free from clerical influence than the average voter of the province of Quebec. Priests exercise no influence in these matters. They refrain from action in them. And they could not interfere with the exercise of the franchise. Take the case of my own county; I verily believe that if the parish priests of my county—and they are respectable men—were to unite to secure my election, I would lose my deposit. They do not interfere in elections; they scarcely vote. I am prepared to admit that there are isolated cases where a clergyman, not of my own denomination only, but of other denominations as well, has interfered. What has been the consequence in Quebec where these isolated cases have occurred? They have led to lawsuits and to the final departure of the parish priest from the charge of the parish—that has been the history of such cases. As a matter of fact I repeat there is no man who would resent more promptly (and I could give numberless examples of it) any interference by the priest with the exercise of the franchise than would the average voter of the province of Quebec. And, as a public man, I believe that everybody is in the same

position of independence that I am in myself. I would like to see anybody be he priest or bishop, interfere with me in the exercise of my functions in this House. I thought it necessary to make this declaration, because, these things being so often repeated it becomes essential that they should be denied. As to the boring underground of the black-robed men who are all the time acting by hidden, obscure, mysterious conspiracies upon members of parliament, upon the electors in general—all this is nothing but a chimera.

Mr. Speaker, I have finished. I do not wish to go one step farther, but you will allow me in closing to quote the last sentence of Mr. Balfour's speech upon the Education Bill:

No other scheme—be it what you like—will give to the educational evils of this country the complete, radical, and final cure which this Bill will give. I count upon the support of our countrymen to enable us to close for ever these barren controversies which for too long have occupied our time, and in the interests alike of parental liberty and of educational efficiency to terminate the present system of costly confusion.

If I quote these sentences it is because they express in far better, far loftier language than I can command my own view in regard to these questions in general. If I could have my wish in the forming of these two new provinces, it would be that in the conduct of public affairs, particularly in the treatment of the minority—which, practically whatever we may enact, is entirely confided to the generosity of the majority—they may have men to lead the destinies of these two great provinces according to the example of these great statesmen of England.

Hon. CLIFFORD SIFTON moved the adjournment of the debate.

Motion agreed to.

On motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, House adjourned at 11 p.m.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS.

FRIDAY, March 24, 1905.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

### SELECT STANDING COMMITTEES.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER moved:

That Mr. Sam. Hughes be appointed a member of the Debates Committee, vice Mr. E. F. Clarke, deceased.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER moved:

That the names of Mr. A. Lachance, M.P., for Quebec Centre, and Mr. Devlin, M.P. for Wright county, be added to the Railway Committee and the Private Bills Committee.