

the same in the law and regulations of the other maritime provinces.

Then we come to the third line of thought. It is that which is held by our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens, it is also held by many Protestants, and it is: that you cannot have education and religion separated. A great writer has expressed the thought in this sentence:

So natural is the union between religion and education that you may justly assume neither is where both are not.

Our Roman Catholic brethren attach more importance than our Protestant friends as a rule do (though many Protestants agree with them) to this question of religious education. They say that with them it is a matter of conscience; they say they must have their children taught by persons of their own faith who can give instructions in their own creed, and they would be very much pleased if we could adopt their views. They say—and who shall contend that there is not much truth in their assertion—they say that you cannot rely upon children receiving proper religious instruction in the home. I fear there is something in that statement; a little more to-day than there was in the good old times. Who shall say that to-day religious instruction receives as much attention in the homes of Canada as it did in the days of our grandparents? We are living in a very rapid age, and I am afraid there is some room for the contention of our Roman Catholic brethren that religion will not be taught to the children of Canada unless the foundation of it is given to them in the schools. We who form the Protestant majority may not be able to agree with them on that point, but it is not because we object to religious instruction; most of us I think, would be pleased that our children should receive some measure of religious instruction in the schools; but the trouble is that you cannot unite the people of any community in an agreement as to what is religion. Religion to many is creed and dogma and there will be differences of creed and dogma, and inasmuch as it is not possible to bring the people of a community to a common line of thought and action on that subject, we who form the Protestant majority say that we see difficulty in teaching any special form of religion in the schools. But while we may not agree with our Roman Catholic brethren on that question, we, I think, can agree that their view of the matter—that is as to the need of religious instruction in the schools—is entitled to our profound respect, and that it is held to-day, not by Roman Catholics only, but to a very large extent also by Protestants.

It is argued by some persons that we cannot make any change in the conditions with respect to these Northwest Territories. I am not referring to anything particularly said in this House. My right hon.

friend the First Minister has not declared that it is not within the power of this parliament to make a change. He has not declared that there is any legal or binding obligation resting on the parliament of Canada to re-enact the clauses of the Act of 1875.

Mr. SPROULE. I think the First Minister expressly claimed that it was binding.

Mr. FIELDING. The point of difference is this. The First Minister does not, as I understand it, deny the absolute right and freedom of every member of this parliament to vote on this question as his conscience and intelligence shall direct him. I, at all events, take that view, and that is what I understood to be the view of my right hon. friend; but what my right hon. friend does say is that if you read the whole history of the question, you will come to the conclusion that though, as a matter of law, there may be no binding obligation—though in that sense you may not be able to produce a written contract, signed, sealed and delivered, as my hon. friend the leader of the opposition demanded a few moments ago—there may arise out of the whole history of this matter an obligation which the parliament of Canada should consider, and which many men regard as a moral obligation which this House should fulfil.

Mr. SPROULE. The right hon. the First Minister went much further than to speak of it as a moral obligation, because he used the expression that the constitution provides that we must do it.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not think he said that the constitution provides that we must do it. I do not think my right hon. colleague is aware of any method by which any member of this parliament can be compelled to vote in any other way than his intelligence and conscience dictates. But what I understood him to say is that the spirit of the constitution created an obligation, and there he will be supported by very many men on both sides of the House. For the purpose of record let me read the section in the Act of 1875—section 11, chapter 49, Act 1875:

When and so soon as any system of taxation shall be adopted in any district or portion of the Northwest Territories, the lieutenant governor, by and with the consent of the council or assembly as the case may be, shall pass all necessary ordinances in respect to education; but it shall therein be always provided, that a majority of the ratepayers of any district or portion of the Northwest Territories, or any lesser portion or subdivision thereof, by whatever name the same may be known, may establish such schools therein as they may think fit, and make the necessary assessment and collection of rates therefor; and further, that the minority of the ratepayers therein, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, may establish separate schools therein, and that, in such latter case, the ratepayers establishing such Protestant or Roman Catholic separate schools shall be liable only to assessments of such rates as they may impose upon themselves in respect thereof.