

The statement referred to is as follows:—

“The question of bilingual schools has aroused great public interest throughout the province. The Government has been strongly urged to declare its policy. It has failed to do so. The Government appointed an able commissioner many months ago to investigate and report. It has been suggested that it is hurrying on the election before this report is presented, so as to avoid a declaration of policy on this important question. The people of this province should not permit the Government to evade the issue or shirk the responsibility. The Government does not require an educational expert in order to define its general attitude or policy on this question. It may require educational experts to devise the best possible methods of giving effect to its policy. The failure of the Government to grapple with this question and to declare its policy is responsible for the present agitation throughout the country. The Government has been administering the affairs of the Department of Education for about seven years. If they knew of the conditions and are satisfied with them, they should frankly and publicly defend them. If they knew of the conditions and are not satisfied with them, they should have had the courage and capacity to grapple with them and seek to remedy that which they believed to be wrong. If they did not know of the conditions, then their administration is incompetent and inefficient. The electors of this province have a right to hear from Sir James Whitney when he opens his campaign, a statement of the policy of the Government in connection with these schools. As the Government is responsible for the administration of the Department of Education, it has been suggested to me that it is not needful that the leader of the Opposition should do more than demand of the Government a statement of its policy, but on a question of this moment I think the electors have a right to know the policy of the Opposition. Let us look, then, at the facts as they present themselves.

“At the present time our French-Canadian fellow-citizens in this province number about 250,000. They constitute almost one-tenth of our entire population, and their number is increasing. Apparently the teaching in many of their schools is neither satisfactory to them nor to us, their children are not receiving the education they should have to fit them for their life-work. Two very divergent views have been presented as to the policy which we should pursue in dealing with these schools. First, the view of some who would prohibit the use of French in any of the schools of the Province and would compel all the scholars to learn English, and learn English alone; in short, would entirely wipe out of existence any school except a school where English alone is taught. And at the other extreme there are those who claim that there should be no requirement that the children should learn English or in our schools study or acquire any language other than the French language. The supreme consideration in determining the policy to be pursued must be the welfare of the children, and best promote their interests, and viewed from the standpoint of the interests of the children, we cannot approve or support either of these extreme positions. English is the language of this continent. It is the official language of this province. Our French-Canadian fellow-citizens will agree with us that any child in this province who does not acquire at school a good working knowledge of English is handicapped in the struggle for life, and has fewer avenues of advancement opened to him than he otherwise would have. It is the duty of the State, therefore, to see that in every school of the province every child receives a thorough English education. But, on the other hand, we should not seek to prevent the children of our French-Canadian fellow-citizens retaining the use of