

SEPARATE SCHOOLS IN MANITOBA.

MOTION.

HON. MR. GIRARD moved :

That an humble Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General; praying that His Excellency will cause to be laid before this House, copies of all documents submitted to the Privy Council on the subject of the abolition of separate schools, and on which action has been taken with respect to the Act passed by the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba, abolishing the said separate schools or modifying to some extent the system in force before 1890.

He said: This question is a consequence of the first. I was very glad to hear the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat express his opinion on our position, and the action of the Local Legislature of Manitoba. I do not like to blame the Legislature of Manitoba in any way. They have their duties and responsibilities; and I prefer to rely on the ruling of the province that they represent before coming to this Parliament with any accusation against them. At the same time, we all see what they have done. The Roman Catholic population of Manitoba are suffering under an injustice, and they have laid their case before the Government; and it is for this reason I have moved for the papers referred to in my motion. Hon. gentlemen are aware that in the Local Legislature last session an Act was passed repealing the separate school law, and another Act was passed prohibiting the use of the French language in all public documents; and as a consequence of that law all the proceedings of last session, including the statutes, were printed and distributed only in the English language. The question I now bring before you is not absolutely a new one. It has been the cause of struggle and of strife in the different provinces of the Dominion at various times, and has been settled in one way or the other; and all cause for dissatisfaction in this respect appears now to be confined to the Province of Manitoba. I do not understand why such a position has been taken there, because if there was a part of the Dominion that needed protection and assistance it was certainly Manitoba and the North-West which are being rapidly settled to the advantage and profit of the Dominion. The attention of the nations of the world is being directed to that part of our Dominion, and emigration is flowing in there rapidly to share in its advantages—and sometimes in its miseries—because no new country is ever set-

tled without some misery and trouble. Therefore, we have a right to be assisted there, and we expect that the people of the rest of the Dominion will be disposed to help us. It was unjust on the part of the Government of Manitoba to have allowed a measure to come before the Legislature to force the Roman Catholic population to abandon their separate schools, and they look to the Dominion to see if there is not protection to be found somewhere to defend the French and Catholics of Manitoba against such an unjust law. My intention is not to blame anyone for this legislation; I am here, just as we all are, I suppose, with the common view of advancing the interest of my country, and to do my humble share in what it is possible to do for the best interests of the Dominion. I am far from willing to blame the Government for what has been done. It is not always easy for a Government to do what they desire for the protection of a particular section of the country, but I know that they are not indifferent to our position in Manitoba. They have become interested in what is being done in that province, and are endeavouring to mitigate the troubles caused by the Act of the Local Legislature. To-day the School Act has been submitted to the Supreme Court for a decision as to its constitutionality, and the judgment, I hope, will be given in equity, and will be one such as will cause animosity to disappear from amongst the people and produce permanent peace in our country; because it is unnecessary to say that no more burning question than that of education can be brought before the people. We all try to live as friends and neighbours, but we have our prejudices and our rights, and we hold to them. The Catholics of Manitoba have their separate schools, and they contend that they shall have them at all times. It is not so much perhaps for ourselves that we contend for our rights, but in defending our separate schools I will surprise no one by saying we defend the tenets of our church and the commands of the Supreme Maker of the law, when He said to his disciples before leaving them, "Go and teach all nations," and since we understand that our bishops and priests are the depositories of that doctrine and that true education must come through them. There is no other authority to determine the administration of our schools, and the education that our children must