

I draw the hon. First Minister's attention to the fact that he claims to have done a great deal more than was proposed either by the Remedial Bill or the commissioners who were sent by the Government of Sir Mackenzie Bowell to Winnipeg, and that he is in direct antagonism with the hon. Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton), who controverts this view in the strongest possible manner, and also with the Attorney General of Manitoba (Mr. Cameron) who introduced the Bill in the Manitoba legislature.

I pass on as rapidly as I can and am only taking the time I consider absolutely necessary. As this is perhaps the only opportunity that may be presented for discussing the question, I feel it due to its importance and the share which the late Government, of which I was the head, had in it, to put the facts, as I think, more correctly upon record than they would stand if the statement of the hon. First Minister were allowed to go unchallenged.

Comparing the hon. Premier's statement at Montreal with the Bill recently introduced by the Manitoba Government in pursuance of the settlement, I find very striking contradictions. The hon. gentleman said :

Wherever there are ten Catholic children, it will be permitted to priests to enter the school at half-past three o'clock in the afternoon and give religious teaching.

In every municipality where there are 25 children belonging to the Catholic Church, and in every town and municipality where there are 50 children belonging to that church, the commissioners will be obliged, on the petition of the parents, to provide a Catholic teacher, not only to teach religion, but secular matters, such as arithmetic and grammar, as well.

Contrast the Bill itself with the description which the hon. First Minister has given of it, and which I am afraid he must have given after a very careless perusal of that measure. The Bill itself says :

Religious teaching in public schools is to take place between 3.30 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and is to be conducted "by any Christian clergyman whose charge includes any portion of the school district, or by any person duly authorized by such clergyman, or by a teacher, when so authorized," but this religious teaching may take place only

- (a) When authorized by school trustees, or
- (b) When the parents of at least ten children attending the school in the case of a rural district, or by parents of at least 25 children attending the school in the case of a city, town or village.

One duly-certificated Roman Catholic teacher is to be employed in any village or rural district where the average attendance in any school of Roman Catholic children is 25, and one duly-certificated Roman Catholic teacher in towns and cities where the average attendance is 40.

The hon. Premier took care not to mention other provisions of the settlement which practically compel the children to study text-books, history, &c., which are objectionable to Roman Catholics, for it is to be enacted that "No separation shall take

place during secular work," and no provision is made for meeting the conscientious scruples of Roman Catholics in any other matter than purely religious teaching.

The settlement contained in the Manitoba Bill of 1897, involves therefore the following :—

Roman Catholics to obtain advantage of the right to have either religious exercises or religious teaching must attend the schools as conducted under existing laws obnoxious to their consciences and in derogation of their rights. But when, and only when, an average attendance at a particular school in town or country reaches a certain figure, they may have a Roman Catholic teacher and a Roman Catholic priest to give religious exercises.

The teacher must be fully qualified under the general law, and must teach from the very text-books to which earnest conscientious objections are made by Roman Catholics.

Outside of Winnipeg and large towns, therefore, the "average attendance" renders the Bill practically inoperative. For the children must gather from far and wide and make a record of attendance at the same school, under the existing system before their parents or guardians can obtain for them the right to have the religious teaching between 3.30 and 4 o'clock each day or to have a Roman Catholic teacher teach from Protestant school-books.

Nevertheless the hon. Premier, speaking in Hull on March 16th, said :

Taking up the Remedial Bill, he denied that under it the minority would have secured their rights, and challenged any Conservative to prove that they would have got as much as under the present settlement. In order to have separate schools, three things were necessary : distinct organization, legislative grants and exemption from taxation. The Remedial Bill only gave the first ; the present settlement gave all three.

The Remedial Bill secured separate schools and provided for the creation of a Roman Catholic board of control and the teaching of their own language and their own selection of text-books, &c.

Five Roman Catholic heads of families could have a school district established or allowed so long as there were ten Roman Catholic children of school age living within the district or proposed district not over three miles from the proposed school site.

Yet the hon. Premier says the Remedial Bill gave no organization. Section 28, subsection 2, of the Remedial Bill, provided as follows :—

No Roman Catholic who is assessed for the support of a separate school shall be liable to be assessed, taxed or required in any way to contribute for the erection, maintenance or support of any other school, whether by provincial law or otherwise ; nor shall any of his property in respect of which he shall have been so assessed, be so liable.