

SAYS SCHOOL LAW MUST BE CHANGED

**Premier Norris Tells Ukrainians
That Bilingual Conditions Can-
not Be Continued.**

**Nothing Will Be Done in Spirit
of Hostility—Law to Be the
Best for All.**

That the bilingual clause in the school law will be changed, was definitely stated by Premier Norris yesterday at the legislative building to a deputation of Ruthenians, which besought the government to maintain the bilingual system unaltered. What the government will propose in the way of legislation Mr. Norris did not indicate. He said, however, that nothing would be done in a spirit of hostility to the Ukrainians or to any one else. It was the desire of the government to frame a school law capable of being administered in a generous and tolerant manner. There was no question that the law regarding bilingualism had created a state of affairs which could not be permitted to endure. Up to the present, the precise remedy had not been suggested, and the government would require the co-operation of all nationalities in order to arrive at a solution of the problem.

T. D. Ferley, the member for Gimli, introduced the deputation, which was received in the legislative chamber by Premier Norris, Hon. T. H. Johnson, Hon. R. S. Thornton, and Hon. J. W. Armstrong.

The deputation presented a petition, signed by 6,000 persons, requesting the maintenance of the bilingual clause, and various other things. The text of the petition has already appeared in the Free Press.

Fault in Administration.

Paul Arsenych was the first speaker for bilingualism. He said the fault was not in the system but in the administration of it. The present government had pledged itself to establish a national school system on the basis of the Laurier-Greenway settlement. He hoped that settlement was not to be regarded merely as a "scrap of paper."

There had been so much misrepresentation that it was believed the Ruthenians were opposed to English. Mr. Arsenych said he resented this. It was a necessity for the Ruthenians to learn English. They learned it willingly, for their own advantage.

The Ruthenians had not forced themselves into this country. They had been invited. Moreover, they had realized that in coming they were exchanging oppression for freedom. Consequently, they had put aside forever the hope of forming a separate national group. But education should be natural and not artificial. In moral and mental training the bilingual school, with properly trained teachers, was an indispensable factor for them. They held that their development should be promoted as quickly and easily as possible.

Shortage of Good Teachers.

The Ruthenians were young in the country. They belonged to a different race from the English-speaking citizens of this country. In order to neutralize the differences between the races, the bilingual teacher was a big factor. The bilingual teacher went among his people with the one object of educating and uplifting his people. Considering there was a lack of teachers in the province the na-

tural consequence was that non-English communities, if bilingualism was abolished, would not get good teachers. Furthermore, the teacher was not likely to understand the home of the child. This was prejudicial to the child's welfare. Opponents of bilingualism were fond of citing the example of Winnipeg. But this example was not fair, because the foreign child in Winnipeg learned English not in the school alone but in the street and among his playmates. It was not possible for the foreign-born child in a foreign-born community to do this. Education should be directed along natural and gradual, instead of artificial lines. The mere teaching of English should not be put before a child as the best possible attainment but merely as means to an end.

Says Failure in U. S.

Mr. Arsenych asserted that the one-language school system of the United States had failed. It had caused the upgrowth of great numbers of private schools, which were not under state foreign to those taught in the public schools. There was no doubt that this system had weakened American national sentiment.

Coming close to home, Mr. Arsenych said the absence of bilingualism in Winnipeg forced foreign children to attend private schools. In these private schools they used text books which had been prepared for German, Austrian and Russian schools. It was easy to see what a bad effect this would have. There was no remedy for the situation short of establishing properly regulated bilingual schools.

Preserve Language and Culture

"We claim our right to preserve our language and culture," said the speaker. "But we want to do so openly and under the control of the government. We, therefore, ask that the unrest among our people be ended by the formation of a national school system on the basis of the Laurier-Greenway settlement. We appeal to you for protection, so that we may develop our families by natural and not artificial means.

Would be Blow

B. Mareck, a school teacher, and the secretary-treasurer of Gimli rural municipality, said the abolition of bilingualism would be a great blow to the children in his district. It would take much time before English speaking teachers could handle the situation. There had been a great improvement since the bilingual teachers entered the district. If the system was abolished, it would be hard to get other teachers to stay in the locality.

N. A. Hryhorchuk, a farmer of Gilbert Plains, said his district was largely populated by Ruthenians, and it was making great progress. There were a number of bilingual schools. The children were learning English rapidly, and the abolition of bilingualism would be a great blow. They trusted that it would not be necessary for them to appeal to the federal government for relief.

J. Petrushevich (editor of the Canadian Ruthenian) said the general objects of the Ruthenians were well represented by the petition which had been laid before the government. He repeated briefly the arguments against bilingualism. The objection that every nationality would want bilingualism was answered by the fact that only one or two nationalities had taken advantage of the clause in more than a decade. Perpetuation of the Ruthenian language in Canada was not the object of the Ruthenian bilingualists. Centuries of oppression had not exterminated it in Europe. It was therefore hardly likely that the only means of perpetuating it was bilingualism in Canada. They simply demanded the natural right of using their language here, and in order to have this, the instruction of the children in it was essential.

Mr. Petrushevich denied that bilingualism promoted separation. On the contrary, he said, bilingualism tended to co-operation between the various races by removing a potent cause of jealousy. He denied that bilingual teaching is wasted, or that it handicaps the pupil in acquiring English. Some members of the legislature had said yesterday that they had open minds on this question. Alas, it often seemed that there was a wall of prejudice between the open minds and the strongest arguments. What proof, asked the speaker, could the members of the government give that it had tried to understand the Ruthenian problem? They did not know the Ruthenian history and the Ruthenian language. In reference to the meeting to which some members were invited last night, Mr. Petrushevich said one member declared that if the Ukrainians did not stop this kind of thing they would be sent to Brandon. This was a sample of the prejudice which clouded the discussion of the problem. Also, the speaker objected to a statement made by the Hon. Dr. Thornton in his recent speech in the house. He had read the elaborate and carefully prepared speech in which the minister presented the result of his studies. There he had found that in Manitoba there were so many Poles, so many Scandinavians, so many Germans, so many Russians, and so many Austrians. But there had been no mention of Ukrainians. Now, the Ukrainians did not want to exist as a separate nation, nothing was farther from their thoughts. But they did not want to be classed as Austrians, because they were not Austrians. They wanted that explicitly understood. They had come from Austrian oppression, and they believed that they would become an element of strength in the great British empire.

Dr. Thornton explained that he took the figures in question from the Dominion census of 1914, together with the names and classifications. But the classification complained of was not "Austrian," but "Austro-Hungarians."

Premier Replies.

Premier Norris, replying to the delegation, said he appreciated the importance of the question and also the kindness of so many Ruthenians coming to the legislature to discuss the question with the government. The government required all the information possible on the subject. He had great sympathy with the views presented, but there were several points on which it was impossible for him to agree with the speakers. The delegation could remain assured that the hope expressed by one of its spokesmen that whatever was done would be done in the best interests of the whole province, would be fulfilled.

The petition spoke of unrest in regard to the bilingual situation, but nothing was said in the petition as to who had caused the said unrest, nor as to what was meant, so he could not comment on that item. In regard to the suggested creation of a chair of Ukrainian language and literature in Manitoba university that was a matter which rested with the officials of the university.

Must Consider All.

It was quite true, as one of the speakers said, that the Ukrainians had been invited to come to Canada. Canada extended the freedom of British institutions to the Ukrainians, and gave them a hearty welcome. Manitoba had no desire to treat harshly any section of the community. However, the welfare of all the nationalities of the province had to

be considered, and the government's efforts would be along that line.

Many English-speaking Canadians thought that if the government extended to the Ukrainians the same privileges and institutions which they themselves enjoyed, they were doing pretty well. They thought that if they offered the Ukrainian population the same system of education as they enjoyed themselves, it was not so bad a chance for the Ukrainians and other nationalities. Evidently some people did not consider that enough.

When any amendment of the school law in respect to bilingualism came before the law amendments committee, said the premier, representations would be welcomed from any class of the community. He could not that day go into a discussion as to the respective merits of bilingualism and monolingualism.

One member of the delegation, said Mr. Norris, had pointed out that in the past bilingualism had been prostituted to political purposes. Was it desired by the delegation that the bilingual system be continued by employing the same methods. "I am here to say, gentlemen," said Mr. Norris, "that it will not be the business of this government to conduct the department of education of Manitoba for political purposes (Cheers.) It will not be conducted as a political machine. The money that we have to spend on education will be expended in the best interests of the young of every nationality in the province."

Something Wrong.

When the present government took office, continued the premier, it had been felt that there was something wrong in connection with the bilingual schools. Dr. Thornton, the minister of education, had gone thoroughly into the question and had received special reports from the officers of his department, including all the school inspectors. To that Dr. Thornton had added his own keen personal inspection and observation.

Mr. Norris continued: "The result of that inquiry has been presented to the legislature for the benefit of all the people of Manitoba. Will any gentleman here, or any gentleman in this province, say that the state of affairs revealed by that inquiry should continue? Will any of our friends suggest a remedy for that condition of things? It is easy to ask for money. It is easy to object to the school system from one angle of the compass, but we shall require the co-operation of all nationalities and of all the people if we are to arrive at a successful solution of this matter.

"The government has received no recommendations that appear to fill the bill, although the multiplicity of nationalities within the province makes the present law impossible. You gentlemen here today are here on behalf of one nationality. As far as you are concerned the others may look out for themselves. You leave it to the government to place other nationalities in the same position as yourselves or not as it sees fit.

"A solution must be found by having regard to what is in the best interest of all nationalities. I had a deputation wait on me the other day which was opposed to the bilingual system. They presented their ideas to me, very definitely. That delegation was composed of educated and representative men not in favor of bilingualism. The government has no axe to grind with any organization.

In regard to the statement made by one of the speakers of the delegation that a member of the legislature had threatened certain of the petitioners with internment, the premier said there was no animus against the Ukrainians as such. But people who openly gave expression to opinions that were not in the interest and welfare of Canada would be rounded up no matter to what nationality they belonged. He believed the Ukrainians as a people were law-abiding, peaceable subjects.

Mr. Norris stated that already he could tell the delegation, and he did so in a friendly spirit, that some of their demands would not be granted, as they were not consistent with the requirements of a mixed population. But he could assure the delegation that the administration of the school law in Manitoba would always be undertaken in a spirit of conciliation. Whatever steps were taken would be taken with no thought of hostility towards the Ukrainian people. What the government desired most to have was the co-operation of the Ukrainians and of the other nationalities of the province.