

DIVERSITY OF VIEWS ABOUT BILINGUALISM

Leadership of Clergy in Educational Agitation Questioned at Meeting of Poles.

Father Kowalski Attacks Minister of Education and Demands Full Bilingual Rights.

Almost since the outbreak of the present war the Polish residents of this city did not witness such a lively meeting as the one held from 3 to 7.30 yesterday afternoon in connection with the bilingual schools.

The meeting, which was attended by 500 men and women, was called by the "League of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality," constituted at the first protest meeting of the Union of the Roman Catholic associations in the Holy Ghost church. Francis Sedzjak is the president of this league.

Stefan Dybek, a prominent member of the Holy Ghost parish, was elected chairman.

Bronislaw Gorecki, in opening the meeting, announced that in view of the fact that a large number of the Polish people had expressed their dissatisfaction with the first meeting of the 18th of December, at which the resolution of protest was passed, contending that it was organized and attended almost exclusively by a group of Holy Ghost parishioners, with Francis Sedzjak and the clergy at its head, they deemed it necessary to call a larger meeting yesterday, to which all the Polish people were invited, to talk over the threatened abolition of section 258 of the Manitoba School act providing for bilingual education.

The programme speakers were Rev. Francis Kowalski, O.M.I., parish priest of Holy Ghost; Francis Sedzjak, and J. Makarski.

Rev. F. Kowalski, in his speech, analyzed very minutely the recent speech of the minister of education, Dr. Thornton, in the local house, criticizing it very severely, and stating that it is up to the Polish people to fight to the last the attempt to deprive the Polish people in Manitoba of their full right to have bilingualism as under the existing law.

A delegation consisting of Theo. Stefank, member of the Ukrainian central committee, R. Sochnacki, Wm. Chlopian, and J. Jastrenski, was received from a meeting of the Ukrainians held at the same time and for the same purpose in the Grand opera house.

Theo. Stefank announced that the Ukrainian meeting had passed a resolution, which he conveyed, appealing to the Polish people to fight jointly with them to the very end the attempt to abolish bilingualism and their teachers' training schools. It was, he said, a common cause of the Ruthenians and Poles in equal measure, as the Ruthenians and Poles are being equally exploited by the Canadians.

R. Sochnacki read an anonymous letter which appeared in a Winnipeg newspaper purporting to be from a Pole. This letter exposed the racial rights of Poles and Ruthenians in Galicia, expressing a fear that the retention of the present bilingual system may bring about similar conditions in Canada, and showing Ukrainians in a very bad light. This correspondence urged the abolition of bilingualism.

The meeting passed a resolution condemning the aforementioned correspondence for being anonymous, and expressing their disapproval of the sentiments therein contained regarding the Ukrainians, with an amendment by Louis Kon requesting all the papers in Winnipeg not to print any letter purporting to come from Poles and dealing with the bilingual question, unless fully signed.

Francis Sedzjak moved an amendment to the resolution passed on the 18th December protesting the abolition of the bilingual clause on the part of the League of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality. The amendment demanded the retention of the Polish teachers' training school in Winnipeg or the giving of special loans to Polish youths intending to become teachers, as was the practice of the last government.

In enlarging upon his amendment, Mr. Sedzjak told his audience that the Poles should not give in in this fight, and ought to demand what is rightly coming to them. He said that he was convinced, after conversation with influential persons in the political world and with the minister of education himself, as well as by the action of the department of education in refusing admittance to the Polish training school to several young men recommended by the clergy of the Holy Ghost, that the paramount reason for abolishing the training school and bilingualism, besides the agitation of English jingoes and Orangemen, is the fear of economic competition on the part of the English-speaking Canadians, the desire to deprive the Polish youth from having an opportunity to enter the teachers' profession, or any positions above digging sewers and cutting lumber.

Louis Kon appealed to the audience not to leave such an important matter in the hands of a section of the Polish community only. He expressed his supposition that the government is closing the training school from a desire to introduce uniform training of teachers, and not according to nationalities, as every institution of learning is open to every person, without distinction as to nationality and religion, and to stop the meddling of the local Polish clergy in matters of training teachers as was the case in the past. In this the government, he said, ought to be upheld by every right-thinking Polish man and woman. Mr. Kon introduced the following resolution: 1. Whereas the present school system of the province of Manitoba is going to be changed, as can be assumed from the articles appearing in the English press, as well as from the declarations of the ministers and private members at recent sessions of the provincial legislature; 2. whereas we consider the present school system inefficient in educating the Polish children so as to enable them to compete with others for positions both in the economic and social life of this country; 3. whereas the agitation carried on at the present time by a portion of the Polish community as well as by the Ukrainians is improper for a satisfactory solution of this question to the Polish people and to this country in general;

"This meeting, considering itself a full and complete representation of the Polish people of all the political, social, and religious shades, resolves to inform the provincial government of Manitoba that the Poles are asking:

"A—Fully and properly qualified teachers for all the schools attended by the Polish children;

"B—A change in the unsatisfactory present bilingual system for a uniform one in the whole of Manitoba, a system according to which the English language would be the language of instruction and the Polish language would be imparted to the Polish children as an optional subject after the school hours.

"C—To introduce in the high schools the teaching of the Polish language, history, and literature on a par with other modern languages."

Max Major spoke in favor of the resolution, after which Rev. Bishop Markiewicz, of the Burrows avenue Polish church, supported it in a very

eloquent manner. He stated that the Polish people should not be afraid of the English language, and that they should demand that the government should provide for the education of their children in their own language.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the speakers and a resolution to hold another meeting in the near future.

forcible manner. He pointed out that the League of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity consists only of the Holy Ghost parishioners and their temporary hangers on, who are willing, for their personal gains and for the desire of controlling the teachers, the schools, and through them the communities, to throw the Polish people into a dangerous and undesirable fight with those with whom we came to live in this country. Where, he asked, did the Roman Catholic clergy of Winnipeg bring the Polish people of Manitoba supporting the Roblin government? How many young Polish men or women educated in the bilingual schools sponsored by the Roblin government attained any better positions socially or economically in the past ten years?

He admonished the people to take into their own hands the question of adjusting the educational matters of Manitoba, and to exclude the lead of the clergy, who, as in the old country, are desirous of keeping the people in servility and ignorance.

C. P. Kamlenski and J. Nowacki also spoke in favor of a resolution being passed which has a chance of being considerably favored by the government, and which would prove of value to Canada and to the Polish people.

The division of opinion in the meeting following the discussion was marked, and as feeling ran high, there was for a time the possibility of disturbances resulting. The opportunity of speaking to Mr. Kon's resolution being refused to a number who favored that section of the audience, not in sympathy with the League of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, retired, and the audience which remained then passed unanimously the resolution submitted by F. Sedzlak.