

WINNIPEG SCHOOLS AND BI-LINGUALISM.

While the racio-religious attempt to defeat Mr. McKerchar's re-election to the School Board has happily failed, it is to be hoped that the lesson of this election will not be lost upon the citizens of Winnipeg and, indeed, of the whole Province. Let it be well understood that there is no objection to a non-English-speaking School Trustee, Alderman, or even Mayor. It is certainly as much the boast of democratic Canada as it is of the adjoining Republic that the highest offices in the State are within the reach of the humblest-born citizen.

But it is, and must remain, a cardinal principle that candidates for civic or other public office in Canada must present themselves to the electors as Canadian citizens, seeking to represent not one but all nationalities contained in the community. The direct opposite of this was the basis of the fight organized against Mr. McKerchar's return. P. J. Alekno, the candidate brought out against Mr. McKerchar, was the nominee of a Polish-Ruthenian-German faction, which sought to elect him on racio-religious grounds. It is a minor point that Mr. Alekno has no qualifications for the position of School Trustee and that he possesses but a poor command of the English language.

The sinister feature of this opposition was its direct menace to the public school system of Winnipeg. Behind Mr. McKerchar's opponent were racial and religious factions seeking to introduce bilingual teaching into the public schools of Winnipeg and also to force the School Board to implement the Coldwell amendments. As to this there is a frankness, which at least is commendable, in the election literature and in the press campaign of Mr. McKerchar's opponent.

In subsequent issues The Free Press will give translations from Winnipeg weekly organs, printed in Polish, Ruthenian and German, showing the people of this city the kind of campaign which was launched during recent days to elect P. J. Alekno to the School Board; T. D. Ferley, a Ruthenian, to the City Council; and J. G. Kimmel, a German, also to the City Council. Mr. Alekno is a Lithuanian, but racially he is acceptable to, and makes common cause with, the Ruthenian and Polish factions in the present racio-religious alliance.

For the present, The Free Press desires to draw attention to the contest between Mr. McKerchar and Mr. Alekno. It is true that Mr. McKerchar was returned by a large majority—polling, in fact, more than twice as many votes as his opponent. But the fact that Mr. Alekno, a totally unfit man for the position, could command nearly 800 votes in a straight racio-religious appeal, and the further fact that this appeal actually defeated Mr. McKerchar in one of the polls, should open the eyes of the citizens at large to what is being attempted by racio-religious factions in this city.

In the light of this contest, and in the light of similar propaganda that has been going on for years past in this city and Province, The Free Press is now prepared to say—and that without the slightest hesitation—that, as far as Manitoba cities and towns are concerned, the bi-lingual clause of the Public Schools Act should at once be repealed, excepting where it is already in operation.

The bilingual clause as it stands today in the Public Schools Act reads as follows:

"When ten of the pupils in any school speak the French language, or any language other than English, as their native language, the teaching of such pupils shall be conducted in French, or such other language, and English, upon the bilingual system."

Under this wide-open clause, it is safe to say that bilingual teaching could be introduced into half the public schools of Winnipeg. And bilingual teaching would necessitate bilingual teachers, efficient or inefficient. Up to the present there has been practically no overt attempt to have this clause implemented as far as Winnipeg and other English-speaking cities and towns of the Province are concerned. The general recognition that the introduction of bilingual teaching under this clause would create chaos in and work havoc to the school system has hitherto proved a restraining influence.

But the persistent corruption of the non-English-speaking portion of the population by unprincipled politicians,

and the introduction into the school system by Hon. G. R. Coldwell of bilingual agitators of the Karmanski type, has changed things. Racial and religious factions amongst the non-English-speaking portion of the electorate have come to believe, and have been given ground for believing, that they are in a position to dictate to the powers that be certain lines of educational and other policy.

It is but plain and simple justice to admit that English-speaking politicians are in large part responsible for the racio-religious agitation in this Province, of which Mr. Alekno's candidature is the latest and, perhaps, the most sinister development. But if Manitoba is to be preserved for British ideals and British standards of education and government, it is time for every man in this city and Province, who deserves and who values the name of "Canadian," to act.