

## AN EXTRAVAGANT CLAIM.

Much printers' ink has been spilt over the school question in this Province, and apparently much more will be spilt before attacks upon the public schools, frontal, rear and flank, are finally abandoned. But the North-West Review, the local organ of the English-speaking Catholics, achieves in its current issue the feat of introducing into the vexed controversy an argument which is entirely new.

The North-West Review is at least entitled to credit for frankness and candor. It propounds its remarkable argument before the eyes of all men, and the citizens of this Province can see it for what it is. Not so with the Coldwell amendments, which were an insidious and subterranean attempt to establish separate racial schools in Winnipeg and other English-speaking cities of the Province. Not so with the racio-religious alliance to elect Mr. Alekno to the Winnipeg School Board, which may be described as a semi-clandestine effort to open a back door.

In brief, the argument of the North-West Review is that the bilingual clause in the present Public Schools Act is a "scrap of paper" as sacred and solemn in every respect as the Treaty of London, signed in 1839 by the Great Powers of Europe, guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium. This bilingual clause, it must be remembered, is the general, wide-open provision under which any ten children, of any nationality, can, at any time, in any public school of Manitoba, demand bilingual teaching and, consequently, a bilingual teacher. This clause, says the North-West Review, constitutes a right guaranteed to every settler, of whatever nationality, coming to this Province.

After a reference to the breaking of the Belgian treaty by the Germans, the North-West Review says that in 1897 a solemn agreement was entered into between the Liberal Government in this Province and the Liberal Government then in power at Ottawa. According to this agreement, non-

English-speaking pupils attending the public schools of the Province were guaranteed instruction in their own language. Under this guarantee, it further declares, the Dominion Government sent forth immigration agents to every country in Europe and enticed immigrants from their native land, assuring them that their language would be respected and that their children would have an opportunity to study it in the schools of the land. "Under this representation," says the Review, "they came to our Province and their rights (yes, rights) have been partially at least respected up to the present time."

Continuing, the North-West Review argues that the proposal of The Free Press to restrict the bilingual provision in the Public Schools Act, as far as cities and towns are concerned, to the area in which it is already in operation would mean the tearing up of another "scrap of paper" and the treading in the dust of British honor.

This claim that immigrants to Manitoba possess a "right" to the continuance of the bilingual clause in the Public Schools Act is quite absurd and grotesque. It rests on the mere assertion of the North-West Review, and this, with all due respect to our contemporary, is insufficient. No proof of any kind is offered that the clause in question was ever used by a Canadian immigration agent to induce settlers to come to Manitoba. Will the North-West Review produce immigration literature mentioning the Manitoba bilingual clause? And will it supply the names of immigration agents who have been authorized to hold out the clause as an inducement to people to come to this Province?

It may well be that private parties have taken upon themselves, for their own advantage, or for the advantage of institutions they represent, to furnish inaccurate information with regard to school conditions in Manitoba. For instance, there appeared last year in a French weekly, published locally, an appeal to French-Canadians in the Province of Quebec to come to Manitoba. This appeal was over the signature of Father Bouillon of Eli, Man., and contained the following statement: "From now on it may be taken for accepted that you will find in Manitoba Catholic schools and, as far as that goes, French schools."

Does the North-West Review contend that Father Bouillon was duly authorized by the Government of Manitoba to make this statement?

The argument of the North-West Review that the bilingual clause of the Public Schools Act confers upon anyone, least of all immigrants who have come to the Province since it was passed, a vested right, is supremely captious. Will the North-West Review say that the Manitoba Legislature does not possess a constitutional right to repeal or modify this clause if it finds it necessary in the public interest to do so? It may say so, but its mere saying so is neither evidence nor proof.