

denunciations of honourable and God-loving men and women who have dared to differ with it; its persistent misrepresentation of the beliefs, aims, words, and acts of opponents; its bitter and unwarranted personal attacks; and its never-ending appeal to those deplorable feelings of sectarian animosity which have made New South Wales a warning example to the whole of Australasia. These are strong statements. I am prepared to prove them in detail, and I invite thereon the freest cross-examination by those who are most interested in testing the truth or otherwise of my assertions.

A Conference.

9. Catholics, as is well known, can never in conscience accept the secular system as satisfactory for themselves. But we recognize the fact that large bodies of our Christian and other fellow-citizens can and do, in conscience, accept the system, relying upon the home and the Church for the religious training of their children, and we furthermore recognize that, in any proposed change, their conscientious convictions should receive fair and proper consideration. Unlike the League, we do not aim at the utter destruction of the secular phase of our system of public instruction. We aim at making that system truly national—truly suited to the conscientious as well as the intellectual requirements of all the people of the nation—secular for those desiring it secular, and religious, on fair conditions all round, to those desiring it religious. We will resist to the utmost any and every attempt to force one cast-iron system of biblical or religious instruction upon the purses and the consciences of people so profoundly divided in religious belief as is the population of New Zealand.

10. Over and over again, in the Press and upon the platform, I have intimated the willingness of the Catholic leaders to meet all other interested parties in conference upon this subject, with only one proviso, the recognition of the proper equal rights of all before the law. Moreover, over and over again we have publicly declared that we are prepared to give fair and friendly consideration to any proposal whatsoever for religion in the school, so long as this principle of proper equality and rights before the law is conceded. There can be no real settlement of this question unless it is broad-based upon justice. And when God's Word comes into the schools it should come in God's good way of truth, and justice, and honour, and not by the path of bitter wrong traced out in the measure now before your honourable House.

XVIII. "SUCCESS" IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

1. Roseate tales are told regarding the alleged "success" of this scheme in parts of Australia. This "success" is asserted more particularly of New South Wales, where the "system has existed" (says the League's petition-card) "since 1866." The story of "success" is built up in the manner favoured in the League's petition-card, and in its partial reflex the ballot-paper of the present so-called "referendum"—namely, by direct misstatement and by the suppression or concealment of even the most notorious evidence that tells in a contrary sense.

2. The "success" in New South Wales is asserted as the "success" of what the League in its petition-card describes as the "system of religious instruction in State schools prevailing" in that State. This means that the alleged "success" is from the viewpoint of religious principles and religious practice. Such "success" necessarily implies two things—(a) Negatively, there should be in it no departure from or violation of religious principles or practice; and (b) positively, that it has promoted religious faith and practice, above all, among the youth brought under the care of the education system in question. The burden of proof of all this falls naturally upon the shoulders of those who allege this "success" as a reason for extending that system to the Dominion of New Zealand. That proof has not been undertaken; it has not even been seriously attempted.

3. On the contrary, the League's failure to furnish such evidence of "success" is in itself a significant though negative confession of failure. Nay, in a positive way high-placed League officials have furnished us with evidence that in certain vital respects the system has been inimical to the common good in the oldest Bible-in-schools State.

4. Thus the Bible in Schools League of 1904 declared that the majority in any State has no moral right to "coerce the minority to violate its conscience, for," the League added, "it can never be for the common good that conscience should be violated." This sound principle of natural and Christian morality was signed by, among others, the Rev. Dr. Gibb (a vice-president of the present League) and by Bishop Sprott (a member of the League executive). Now, in its methods of violating conscience the "system of religious instruction in State schools prevailing" in New South Wales is the very same as that advocated by the League and embodied in the Bill now before Parliament. The New South Wales system violates the consciences of large bodies of objecting taxpayers; it in effect bribes numbers of teachers to do that which loyalty to conscience does not permit; it violates parental rights by the operation of the odious and tricky Irish proselytizing conscience clause; it violates the Crown rights of the Almighty Himself by enabling a certain number of parents and clergy to abdicate in part one of the most sacred duties of parents and the Christian ministry, and to force it upon the shoulders of State officials. There is no need to point out once more the gravity of these various forms of sin against conscience and of violation of God-given rights which are chargeable to the New South Wales system. They have been sufficiently dealt with in the previous parts of this evidence. Here in these violations of conscience we find the deadly permanent sin of the New South Wales system. The cause of religion can never be served by defiance of religious and religious-moral principles. In this fundamental respect the New South Wales system must be adjudged a radical failure.