

NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE.

VERBATIM REPORT

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A

DEPUTATION

TO

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.,
(First Lord of the Treasury,)

THE RIGHT HON. EARL DE GREY AND RIPON,
(Lord President of the Council,) and

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. FORSTER, M.P.,
(Vice-President of the Council,)

ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 1870.

BIRMINGHAM.

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resolutions to Mr. Gladstone, with a view of impressing upon the Government the objections entertained by the League to the Bill. In accordance with this resolution, a request was addressed to Mr. Gladstone, asking him to receive a Deputation. The right hon. gentleman consented to do so, and appointed Tuesday, the 9th of March, to receive the Deputation, at his official residence in Downing Street.

Arrangements were consequently made for the representation of the Branches of the League on the Deputation, and on the day above named the following Members of Parliament, the Executive Committee, the Officers of the League, and the undermentioned Delegates from the Branches, met at the Westminster Palace Hotel, and proceeded thence to the Prime Minister's official residence in Downing Street, where they were received by Mr. Gladstone, who was accompanied by Lord de Grey and Mr. Forster:—

Anstruther, Sir R., M.P.	Lush, J. A., M.P.
Armitstead, G., M.P.	Melly, George, M.P.
Carter, R. N., M.P.	Miall, E., M.P.
Cowen, J., M.P.	Parry, Love Jones, M.P.
Beaumont, H. F., M.P.	Philips, R. N., M.P.
Brogden, A., M.P.	Potter, E., M.P.
Bright, Jacob, M.P.	Rylands, Peter, M.P.
Dalrymple, Donald, M.P.	Samuelson, B., M.P.
Dilke, Sir C. W., Bart., M.P.	Samuelson, H., M.P.
Dixon, George, M.P.	Simon, Mr. Serjeant, M.P.
Eykyn, Roger, M.P.	Shaw, R., M.P.
Fawcett, Henry, M.P.	Sartoris, E. J., M.P.
Forster, Chas., M.P.	Sherriff, A. C., M.P.
Harcourt, Vernon, M.	Stepney, Colonel, M.P.
Herbert, Hon. A., M.P.	Stevenson, J. C., M.P.
Hoare, Sir H. A., M.P.	Sykes, Colonel, M.P.
Howard, James, M.P.	Taylor, P. A., M.P.
Illingworth, Alfred, M.P.	Villiers, Right Hon. C. P., M.P.
Johnson, Andrew, M.P.	Wedderburn, David, M.P.
Kirk, William, M.P.	Whalley, Mr., M.P.
Lawson, Sir Wilfred, M.P.	White, James, M.P.
Leatham, E. A., M.P.	Whitworth, Thos., M.P.
Lewis, J. D., M.P.	Weguelin, T. M., M.P.

DELEGATES FROM THE BRANCHES.

Ashton-under-Lyne—

Green, Thomas, M.A.

Bath—

Dalrymple, D., M.P.
 Edwards, R. P.
 Macnaught, Rev. J., M.A.
 Murch, Alderman Jerom, J.P.

Banbury—

The Worshipful the Mayor
 Brookes, R. H.
 Carter, Rev. L. G.
 Griffin, Dr., J.P.
 Turner, Rev. J.

Bedford—

Hill, Rowland
 Ransom, Edwin

Belper—

Cox, J. Charles, J.P.

Birkenhead—

Billson, Alfred
 Cooke, Bancroft
 Cowie, Alfred
 Stitt, Samuel

Birmingham—

The Worshipful the Mayor
 (Thomas Prime, Esq.)
 Dixon, George, M.P.
 Bunce, J. Thackray, F.S.S.
 Brown, Rev. J. J.
 Chamberlain, Councillor Joseph
 Collings, Councillor Jesse
 Clarke, Rev. Charles, F.R.L.S.
 Dawson, George, M.A.
 Field, Alfred
 Hadley, Felix
 Harris, Councillor William
 Hayes, E. J.
 Jaffray, John, J.P.
 Lloyd, Councillor G. B.
 Martineau, R. F.
 Middlemore, Wm. J.P.
 Osler, Follett, F.R.S.
 Phillips, Alderman, J.P.
 Timmins, Samuel, F.R.S.L.
 Vince, Rev. Charles
 Wright, J. S.

ALL SAINTS' WARD—

Payton, Henry
 Rolason, Councillor

Birmingham (Continued)—**DERITEND WARD—**

Ellaway, H. H.
 Griffiths, Thomas
 Hawkes, W. C.

DUDDESTON WARD—

Ingall, George

HAMPTON WARD—

Barratt, Dr. A.
 Biddle, J.
 Mills, W.

ST. MARTIN'S WARD—

Bennett, W. P.
 Gosling, Wm.

ST. PAUL'S WARD—

Edwards, Mr. Councillor C. H.
 Manton, Mr. Alderman

ST. PETER'S WARD—

Adams, Francis
 Deykin, Councillor
 Gosling, Alfred
 Whitlock, H. J.

ST. THOMAS' WARD—

Baker, George
 Mann, Robert
 Brown, Charles

BALSALL HEATH—

Holland, Alderman

FLINT GLASS MAKERS' ASSOCIATION (T. J. Wilkinson, Sec.)**Bolton—**

Lee, Henry
 Winkworth, Stephen

Bradford—

Holden, Councillor Angus
 Illingworth, Alfred, M.P.

Brighton—

Burrows, J. C., J.P.
 Creak, A., M.A.
 Clark, A., B.A.
 Davey, Councillor
 Mackenzie, W.
 Pettitt, W.
 Tapper, Rev. Dr.
 Wood, Councillor
 White, James, M.P.

- Bristol**—
 Caldicott, Rev. J. W., M.A.
 Gotch, Rev. F. W., LL.D.
 James, Rev. W.
 Pease, Thos.
 Thomas, Herbert, J.P.
- Bromsgrove**—
 Macdonald, A.
 Seroxton, Mr.
- Burslem**—
 Woodall, Wm.
- Bury**—
 Philips, R. N., M.P.
- Canterbury**—
 The Worshipful the Mayor
 (Henry Hart, Esq.)
 Brent, Alderman
 Cooper, John R.
 Cromwell, Rev. Dr.
 Hamilton, R.
 Joyce, James
 Peirce, J. H.
- Carlisle**—
 Potter, E. Esq., M.P.
 Howard, Hon. George
 Sutton, William
- Carmarthen**—
 Sartoris, E. J., M.P.
 Stepney, Colonel, M.P.
- Carnarvon**—
 Evans, Rev. E.
- Cheltenham**—
 Onley, Samuel
 Bubb, J.
- Chesham**—
 Carr, Rev. John
 Cave, James
 Hawkes, C.
 Plato, C.
 Rose, D.
 Rose, G.
- Chester**—
 Beckett, Joseph
 Farish, W., ex-Sheriff
- Coventry**—
 Bray, Charles
 Cash, Councillor John
- Darwen**—
 Baron, Joshua, J.P.
 Dunmock, James
 McDougall, Rev. James
- Denbigh**—
 Wright, Robert
- Derby**—
 Beswick, G.
 Brown, William
 Renals, Alderman J.
- Devonport**—
 The Worshipful the Mayor
 (J. Rolston, Esq., M.D.)
 Lewis, Mr., M.P.
 Rawling, S. B.
- Dewsbury**—
 Clarke, John
 Kilner, William
- Dukinfield**—
 Buckley, N.
 Marshall, William
- Dudley**—
 Cochrane, Alderman, J.P.
 Robinson, Rev. Wade
- Edgbaston**—
 Kenrick, Timothy, J.P.
- Exeter**—
 Bowring, Sir John
 Norrington Councillor
- Falmouth**—
 Fox, Howard, J.P.
 Willmore, Arthur
- Halifax**—
 Hutchinson, Alderman, J. D., J.P.
 Shaw, Alderman, J.P.
 Scarbrough, T. S.
- Handsworth**—
 Ann, Rev. Robert
- Harborne**—
 Newey, C. J.
- Hastings**—
 Banks, John
- Hinckley**—
 Atkins, John
 Atkins, Thomas
 Burrows, Rev. Mr.
 Davis, Samuel
 Perkins, Rev. Mr.

Huddersfield—

The Worshipful the Mayor
 Dodds, John
 Mellor, Wright, J.P.
 Skillick, R.

Huntingdon—

Millard, Rev. J. H., B.A.

Hyde—

Adamson, Daniel
 Dowson, Rev. H. E., B.A.
 Hibbert, Edward
 Hibbert, John
 Robinson, Rev. T., B.A.

Hereford—

Spencer, Philip Russell

Ipswich—

Jones, Rev. E.
 Maude, Rev. F. H.
 Notcutt, S. A., jun.
 Rees, Mr.
 Zincke, Rev. F. Barham, M.A.

Kendal—

Busher, Edward
 Russell, Rev. John
 Swinglehurst, Henry
 Thompson, William

Leeds—

The Worshipful the Mayor
 (W. G. Joy, Esq.)
 Barran, Alderman
 Clarke, F. R.
 Crowther, William, J.P.
 Lupton, Joseph

Leicester—

The Worshipful the Mayor
 (G. Stevenson, Esq.)
 Coe, Rev. C. C.
 Harley, Rev. Robert, F.R.S.
 Hodges, T. W., J.P.
 Paget, T. T., High Sheriff
 Walker, William Henry

London—

Allan, William
 Alder, T. P.
 Applegarth, R.,
 Atkinson, Rowland
 Beales, Edmond, M.A.,
 Bennett, W. C., LL.D.
 Botly, William
 Bovill, W. J.
 Brenehley, Julius

London (continued)—

Buckmaster, T. C.
 Chunrock, E. J., M.A.
 Church, R. H.
 Clayden, Rev. P. W.
 Courtenay, J. I.
 Cremer, W. R.
 Crompton, Henry
 Cunnington, John
 Dilke, Sir C. W., Bart., M.P.
 Dodds, George Wm.,
 Edwards, J. P.
 Emerson, F. R.
 Evans, Howard
 Fooks, W. C., jun., LL.B.
 Fry, Herbert
 Goodwin, Rev. Dr.
 Galpin, T. D.
 Guile, Daniel
 Hill, A. H.
 Hoare, Sir H. A., Bart., M.P.
 Hole, James
 Holyoake, G. J.
 Hoppus, John, LL.D., F.R.S.
 Howell, George
 Herbert, Hon. A., M.P.
 Hodgson, Dr.
 Hansard Rev. S.
 Hales, John
 Ierson, Rev. H., B.A.
 Jones, Lloyd
 Levi, Professor, Leone
 Lushington, G.
 Mackay, C., LL.D.
 Middlemore, J. T.
 Miall, E., M.P.
 McClelland, James
 Moore, S. P., LL.B.
 Mottershead, T.
 Nasmith, D., LL.B.
 Odger, George
 Pare, William, F.S.S.
 Parry, L. J., M.P.
 Payne, J.
 Pennington, Frederick
 Price, Richard
 Rawlinson, Sir Christopher, C.B.
 Robson, John, B.A.
 Robertson, Professor C.
 Russell, R.
 Shaen, William
 Shortt, John, LL.B.
 Slack, H. J.
 Stanesby, H. J.
 Somes, George
 Taylor, P. A., M.P.
 Varley, C.

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Williams, Robert
Worley, A. E.

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Johnson, E.
Miller, Rev. W.
Young, Sir George, Bart.

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Shoveller, John

CHELSEA—

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Boyd, John
Davis, Mr.
Finch, W. Newton
Jeffries, John
Jones, P.
Liggett, Mr.
Pite, H. G.
Sellis, Wm.
Symes, Chas.

DEPTFORD—

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Matthews, A.

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Bennett, W. C., LL.D.
Goodwin, Rev. Thomas, LL.D.

HACKNEY—

Aspland, Dr.
Clennell, Mr.
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Green, C. E.
Miall, Rev. William
Olding, B. S.
Picton, Rev. J. A., M.A.

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Heywood, James, M.A., F.R.S.
Lobley, J. Logan, F.G.S.
McClelland, Jas., J.P., F.R.A.S.
Osborne, John
Reade, Rev. C. Darby

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Alder, T. P.
Emblin, R.
Greenstreet, T.
Gibbons, G.
Hearson, Rev. G.
Mottershead, T.
Sayer, W.

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Stainsby, D.
Silvester, H. R.
Taylor, S. S.
Worley, A. E. T.

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Guedalla, J.
Pratt, Magee

NORTH LONDON—

Bartram, Richard
Clarke, T. C.
Geikie, Rev. C.
Glover, R. R.
Hooper, W. B.,
Hickson, G.
Lucraft, B.
Preedy, A.
Preston, J. T.
Sinclair, R.
Spicer, Henry, jun., B.A.
Titford, A.
Wade, J. M.
Wright, G. W.
Wilson, George

PECKHAM—

Yeats, Dr.

WESTMINSTER—

Beal, James
Carr, J. T.
Courtney, G. J.
Ely, Mr.
McDonald, C.F.
Milligan, Mr.
Noble, John
Tufnell, Mr.

WEST HAM—

Johnson, A., M.P.
Godlee, L.

**WOOLWICH, PLUMSTEAD, and
CHARLTON**—

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Pike, Rev. J. B.
Richards, Rev. J.
Wates, Joseph
White, George

Lichfield—

Chawner, R. C.
Crosskey, Rowland, ex-Mayor
McLean, J. C.

Liverpool—

Prange, Councillor F. G.
Sinclair, Mr.
Thomas, John

Manchester—

Bazley, C. H. J.P.
Mathews, Rev. E., M.A.
Rumney, Alderman
Steinthal, Rev. S. A.

Middlesborough—

Jones, John
Williams, E.
Glover, R. R.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—

Cowen, J., M.P.
Cowen, J., jun.
Hengell, Wm. M.
Rutherford, Dr.
Street, Rev. J. C.

Newport—(Isle of Wight)

Colman, Alfred
Pierce, John

Norwich—

Cooper, R. A.

Northampton—

Harris, Henry

North Shields—

Hudson, Thomas

Nottingham—

Cox, Saml.
Ellis, Edward John
Felkin, William, F.L.S.
Felkin, Fredk.
Gupper, Edward
Hollins, Mr.
Paget, Charles, J.P.
Rothera, G. B.

Oldbury—

Jubb, Rev. W. W.
Stableford, W.
Wheeler, John

Oxford—

Harcourt, Vernon, M.P.

Peterboro'

Taylor, Benjamin

Plymouth—

Anthony, Rev. F. E., M.A.
Collier, W. F.

Reading—

The Worshipful the Mayor
(T. Spokes, Esq.)
Culpin, Thos.
Stevenson, Rev. F.

Rochester—

The Worshipful the Mayor
Aveling, Thos., ex-Mayor
Aveling, Dr.
Belsey, J.
Belsey, F. F.
Boon, James
Bullbrook, Councillor
Coles, Alderman
Edwards, Mr.
Fond, J. R.
Hanham, C. F.
Jellie, Rev. W. H.
Knighton, Dr.
Naylor, Alderman
Steele, Dr.
Warne, T. S.
Wyles, Thomas

Salisbury—

Jones, Rev. W.
Short, Geo., B.A.
Williams, Charles

Sheffield—

Allott, Councillor
Beal, Councillor
Bragge, William, F.R.G.S.
Dronfield, Mr.
Griffiths, Dr.
Knox, G. Walter, B.Sc.
Short, Rev. J. Lettis

Shrewsbury—

Stephens, R.

Southampton—

Maxse, Captain, R.N.

South Shields—

Cowen, Josh., jun.
Edgar, John

Stafford—

The Worshipful the Mayor

Stockport—

The Worshipful the Mayor
Black, Rev. James, M.A.
Coppock, Major
Howard, Alderman
The Town Clerk
Walthew, Alderman

Stourbridge—

Maginnis, Rev. D.

Stroud—

Cooper, Wm.

Tipton—

Blackburn, Rev. F. C.

Tynemouth—

Hudson, T.

Walsall—The Worshipful the Mayor
(W. B. Duignan, Esq.)

Cotterell, G.

Holden, E. T.

Warrington—The Worshipful the Mayor
(C. J. Holmes, Esq.)

Long, William, jun.

Milner, Edward

Rylands, Peter, M.P.

West Bromwich—

Jukes, J. G.

Kenrick, J. Arthur, J.P.

West Kent—

Bird, G.

Bedell, Mr.

Coombs, Rev. J. Wilson, B.A.

Howard, James, M.P.

Miall, Edward, M.P.

Offor, George

Outram, G. E.

Thompson, C. W.

Todd, W.

Whitehead, James

Winchfield—

Kingsley, Rev. Canon

Wolverhampton—The Worshipful the Mayor
(Thomas Bantock, Esq.)

Felkin, Robert

Guttery, Rev. Thomas

Horton, Rev. Thos. G.

Hatton, William

Loveridge, H.

Mänder, S. S.

Walton, Frederick

Wiguelin, T. W., M.P.

Worcester—

Airey, J. F.

MacLean, Councillor

Sherriff, A. C., M.P.

Woodward, Francis

Williamson, Councillor

Windsor—

Browning, Oscar, M.A.

Chamberlain, T., ex-Mayor

Grove, H. J.

Harris, W. H., B.A., F.G.S.

Platt, J.

The Deputation was introduced by Mr. DIXON, M.P., Chairman of the Council of the League, who spoke as follows :—Mr. Gladstone, my Lord de Grey, and Mr. Forster,—The Deputation which I have now the honour of introducing to you consists of about four hundred gentlemen collected from about seventy different localities, and including thirty Members of Parliament and twelve Mayors. These, sir, are the representatives present here to-day of the National Education League, a body which has been in existence only a very few months ; but during that time it has grown into an organisation of unusual magnitude and power, such as will be described to you by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. It is about twelve months since this organisation was projected by a few gentlemen in Birmingham, unknown beyond their immediate locality, and who were mainly distinguished by their earnest perseverance and by their strong conviction of the importance of the principles that they entertain. (Applause.) Those principles

were, that it was the duty of the State to see to the education of every child in the country, and that that was to be effected by a combination of rates and taxes administered by local management, with central executive inspection, and strong control. (Applause.) It was believed that this could best be carried out by making the schools both free and unsectarian—(hear, hear, and applause)—and requiring that attendance at these schools should be made compulsory on the children. (Cheers.) I may mention, sir, that the Executive Committee of the League, upon its formation, was overwhelmed by applications from all parts of the country to attend meetings, and explain more particularly the objects of the League. I myself attended upwards of twenty of such meetings in the most important localities in the country, and it will be interesting to you, sir, to know that, although it is true that at those meetings I did not find myself surrounded by many Conservatives—they are generally adverse to great changes—(laughter)—though I did not find myself accompanied on to the platform by many members of those Churches whose vested interests seemed to be attacked, yet I did find that those meetings were thronged by three important classes. The Nonconformists were always there in great force—(applause)—those leaders of the great Liberal party, who on all great occasions make themselves prominent, were never found wanting ; and behind those bodies we found the working classes assembled in constantly increasing numbers. All this led me to the conclusion that, if this agitation were to be continued for another twelve months—(cheers)—it would be more than probable that in all the Liberal boroughs of the empire we should find that the majority of the voters would be associated with this great organisation, in carrying out what they conceived to be, not merely the question of the day, but the greatest one that has ever occupied the attention of the people. I ought perhaps to say that upon one point—that of free schools—the Leaguers are not quite unanimous ; but the people everywhere have endorsed the opinion of the League ; and also, I would say in addition, that with reference to the religious question, there is only a section of the League that has any difference of opinion, and this section takes up a still more advanced opinion than the great body of the Leaguers. (Applause.) I have now the pleasure to call upon Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the League, who will address you upon the general question.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN : Mr. Gladstone, my Lord de Grey, and Mr. Forster,—It is part of my business to make myself acquainted with the general work of the League, to estimate its real strength, and to study opinion throughout the country, as far as I can correctly gather it from the reports of our branches. Now, of those branches we have already established 114, and I believe there is not a single important town in the kingdom which is not in this way represented. In connection with almost everyone of those branches we have held large public meetings; and, as I have seen it said that a public meeting may be held on either side of a great question, I should like to point out that our meetings have been almost entirely open meetings, at many of which amendments have been moved; and I may also remark that many of them have been town's meetings. For instance, of this nature was the large meeting which was held in the great Hall in Birmingham, on Monday night, at which a resolution was almost unanimously carried in favour of the points which I am about to urge, and the Mayor of the town was requested to attend and form part of this Deputation. There are two considerations to which I should like to call your attention, as showing the strength of this movement. In the first place, there is that point to which Mr. Dixon has made allusion—namely, that this agitation is of very recent and rapid growth. I should say that the League has been officially constituted only five months, although the question was first agitated in Birmingham twelve months ago; but I am quite sure that, if the Government entertain any doubt as to the opinion of the country, and will give us a little time longer—(loud applause)—we will make that opinion sufficiently manifest. The second point is, that this agitation is almost entirely voluntary. I say that, because I do not believe there is a man connected with the League who has made one penny by his services in connection with it. Almost the whole of the work—the work of speaking, and an immense deal of secretarial work—has been done by volunteers, and only for some of the clerical work have we paid, and in the case of poor persons only have we made some compensation for the services which they have rendered; but never more I believe, and in many cases much less, than they would have earned in any other sphere of work. Now, we have received in the course of our agitation the co-operation of the great trades unions, and of almost all the leaders of the great trade societies in

the kingdom ; and I believe I may say that there has never been a meeting of working men called to consider this question at which resolutions have not been passed in favour of the scheme which we urge upon you. Also, we may fairly claim to represent the great bodies of Nonconformists in this country ; but inasmuch as they have established a separate organisation, I feel some delicacy in speaking for them. Now, I will state very briefly the points upon which we are agreed in dissenting from the principles of the Government measure. The day after the Bill was introduced, the Officers issued a circular to all our branches, asking for their opinions upon the subject, and the replies disclosed an almost unanimous concurrence upon certain points. The earnestness of this concurrence is manifested by the fact that not seventy, as Mr. Dixon stated, but ninety-six branches are represented in the present Deputation. They have come from as far north as Newcastle, as far south as the Isle of Wight, as far west as Falmouth, and as far east as Ipswich. (Applause.) In the first place, we object to the year's delay. We think this would be merely to give twelve months to the Denominations to run a race of wasteful expenditure, and to increase sectarian bitterness of feeling. Our remaining objections may be almost summarised in a sentence. We object, sir, to the permissive recognition of great principles ; we ask that the Government should decide those principles for the country ; we ask that they should not leave them as controversies of annual recurrence, and subject to varying, and sometimes contradictory, conclusions. (Applause.) We object to the retention of school fees ; we think that a free school is a necessary corollary to the compulsory attendance of children ; we believe that it is impolitic to ticket one class on account of their poverty—(applause)—and we believe that it will be absolutely impracticable to define the limit at which payment should properly be made. (Applause.) But the strongest objections which we entertain are on the subject of the permissive compulsion, and what I must be permitted to call the permissive sectarianism of the Bill. On these points there is an absolute unanimity of opinion. We object to permissive compulsion, because we say that the measure would only be efficient in large towns, and that in other places it would not be enforced—not because there is any sort of opposition to the principle, but on account of a fear which many persons entertain of any measure which in the slightest degree may increase the

burden of the rates. Sir, we say that such Acts as Denison's Act, which has been an utter failure, and the Free Libraries Act, which has only been applied partially, are illustrations of the results of such legislation. (A Voice: The Baths and Wash-houses also.) Then, with reference to this permissive sectarianism, the Town Councils object to it, and regret the importation of a new element, causing their election to turn upon religious opinion, and not upon personal fitness; and, when they are elected, dividing them into two hostile camps. The Dissenters object to this measure, which they conceive will hand over the education of this country to the Church of England entirely in many parts of the kingdom, especially in agricultural districts; and they think that it must necessarily be followed by a measure which will hand over the education of the people in Ireland to the Church of Rome—(loud applause)—and that in this way the influence, social and political, of those two Churches will be unfairly increased. (Hear, hear.) Further, we consider that this Conscience Clause which is contained in the proposed Bill, or any Conscience Clause, will be absolutely unsatisfactory. (Applause.) Where it is not needed, there, Sir, it will be absolutely nugatory, because the parents will not dare to make use of it; they will be afraid of placing themselves, by signing such a document, under the ban of the Squire and the Parson. (Cheers.) Besides, sir, we say that a Conscience Clause of any kind does not touch the hardship of which Dissenters complain—that the minority will in many districts be taxed to pay for the support of schools which are part of the machinery for perpetuating doctrines to which they have a conscientious objection. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, in conclusion, I have been instructed to express a very earnest hope that the Government, which secured the cordial and unwavering support of the great majority of Liberal Churchmen, and of all the leading Dissenting bodies in this country, in their effort to carry out the principles of religious freedom and religious equality in Ireland—(applause)—will not reject our petition for the application of those principles to England and Wales, and that they will consent to remove from what we all think otherwise a noble measure, those clauses which we conscientiously believe will inflict an intolerable hardship and oppression upon a large class of the community. (Loud applause.)

Sir CHARLES W. DILKE: Mr. Gladstone, my Lord de Grey,

and Mr. Forster,—The point which has been entrusted to me to bring before you to-day is that of permissive compulsion—of the conflict between the principles of permissive and of direct general compulsion. Now, the fact of Mr. Chamberlain having so fully stated the views of the League upon that point, and also the fact that you have thought it right, and the Cabinet have thought it right, to insert a principle of direct compulsion in some shape in the Bill, clear my task is so considerably that I think it will be necessary that I should speak only upon the permissive character of the compulsion which is proposed. It will not be necessary that I should say anything with regard to the necessity, or with regard to the justifiableness, of compulsion in general, because those are admitted by the insertion of the principle in the Bill. But what I would wish, on behalf of the Deputation, and on behalf particularly of the London Branch, in whose name I speak, to call your attention to is, not that we feel, or are able to say, that it might not have been right in the Government to insert some condition with regard to compulsion—we feel it might be proper, in the state of public feeling on compulsion, that some condition should have been inserted by way of a test which should be precedent to compulsion being required; but we feel (and I think I speak the opinion of the whole Deputation on this point) that the condition which is made precedent to the application of compulsion is a condition which is wholly a bad one. Compulsion is a matter which concerns attendance and attendance only, and the condition by which, under the Bill, compulsion is to be applied is one which concerns not attendance, but school accommodation. You make, in this Bill, one condition hinge upon another; you say that where there is a deficiency of school accommodation, and there only, you will have permissive compulsion. Well, even in that case, the compulsion is permissive—and permissive with whom? It is permissive in the country with Boards which will be chiefly composed of farmers. (Hear, hear.) That is to say, Boards composed of persons who have a direct interest in seeing that the compulsion is not applied. In the towns those Boards will be Boards which, whatever their merits or demerits may be, are bodies which very naturally have a strong opinion against any temporary increase of the rates, and thus you give permissive powers to Boards who will consider less the ultimate decrease of the rates than the immediate increase which will result upon the

principle of compulsion being applied. Well, but we go much farther than this, and we object altogether to the permissive legislation of which this Bill is full. As Mr. Chamberlain has pointed out, the Deputation, and the League generally, object not merely to permissive compulsion, they object to permissive free schools and to permissive religion—(applause)—as well as permissive compulsion. We feel that either compulsion is right or wrong. By putting it in the Bill you have acknowledged it is right. If it is right, then, it should be declared to be right by the Imperial Legislature, and if it is wrong it should not be placed in a Government Bill. What we ask is, that compulsion should not be left to Local Boards of any kind or however constituted, but that if you are to have compulsion at all, it should not depend upon local bias, but it should be imposed upon the people by the act of the Imperial Legislature. (Loud applause.)

Mr. MUNDELLA (M.P. for Sheffield): Mr. Gladstone, my Lord de Grey, and Mr. Forster,—The few remarks which I shall detain you with will have reference to the effect of compulsion as an educational power. In the first place, I believe that it is the experience of all those who have seen the influence of education abroad, that without compulsion nothing like a good education is secured. However much you may cover the land with schools, however ample the provision may be that you may make for those schools, as in America, as in France, indeed, and as in Holland, the results will be altogether inadequate to your efforts unless you make it the absolute duty of the parent that the child shall be in attendance, regularly and consecutively, for a certain number of years. My attention was first drawn to this by reason of the fact that I am an employer of labour abroad, that I have seen the working of this system in Switzerland and Germany; and I have seen its contrast, too, in Holland and in France. I am conscious, also, of what is going on in America, and I am bound to say that although America has made the most ample provision of any country in the world for schools, yet American education, instead of progressing, is on the decline. I received only a few days ago a report from the State of Massachusetts. Compulsion may be practically said to be, in America, permissive, as it would be under this Bill. In the city of Lowell, the compulsory powers are carried out as effectually as they can be: 90 per cent. of the children are in school. In the city of Fall River, on the other hand, in the

same State, the compulsory powers have been altogether neglected, as the School Boards confess, and the result is that 50 per cent. of the children are out of school. (Cheers.) Now, I am sure it must have been said to you often, and you must have often read it, that we exaggerate the educational destitution of this country. Sir, I believe it is impossible to describe it, much less to exaggerate it; and I believe those reports which we are all anxiously looking for from the Privy Council, on the state of education in the four largest cities in the Midland Counties and the North, will more than corroborate what I say, and that when they are produced they will be the most black and appalling page in the history of our country. So far from education progressing in this country, I believe it is not progressing in the same ratio as the population, and that we are raising around us a mass of ignorance, pauperism, and crime which is a disgrace to us as a Christian people. (Loud applause.) I am glad to say that this is not exclusively a Liberal question—(hear, hear)—or a Dissenters' question, for I have in my possession at this moment some dozen letters from clergymen of the Church of England, managers of the largest schools in England—one of whom has a school of 1,200 children—and they all, with one exception, say to me: "We agree with you: we must have compulsion, or we shall have nothing effectual; and we are quite prepared for a separation of the religious teaching." (Loud applause.) Now, if we can only introduce that sort of kindly spirit into this controversy, that we are all willing not to urge the teaching of those things on which we differ, but those on which we agree—(applause)—and to insist upon the attendance of children; if you, sir, will only make it absolute that it is the right and the appanage of every child in this country to receive the highest education that can be given—(applause)—because, Sir, we must set up a high ideal; we must not compare ourselves with ourselves, but we must compare ourselves with those great nations that for thirty or forty years have adopted compulsory education, and have thereby produced the most marvellous and extraordinary results. We must not, as Englishmen, be content with anything short of what they have attained.

MR. GLADSTONE: Which nations, Mr. Mundella?

MR. MUNDELLA: Prussia, Saxony, Wurtemberg, Switzerland, Baden Baden.

A VOICE : Holland.

Mr. MUNDELLA : No ; Holland is not compulsory. But I will speak of the great North German Confederation as affording the model—the high ideal—of what we must and ought to attain to in education. Sir, I have wandered from one end of Saxony to another, I have been through Prussia and in many of its largest departments, and I could not find an ignorant child, go where I might. (Loud applause.) It is not only that they are not ignorant, or that, like our own children, they have attained to the reading of a signboard or the scrawling of a name—that is not education—that is not the education which they have enjoyed ; but it is an education that is useful to them in its culture and in its assistance to them in acquiring knowledge in every relation of life. (Loud applause.) Sir, I say if you confer that blessing upon English children, great as have been all the works that you have done before—(loud and prolonged applause)—great as is the promise and the hope of what you will do—(cheers)—your name will be associated with a still greater work—with the greatest blessing which can descend from generation to generation upon the people of this country. (Loud and prolonged applause).

Mr. ROBERT APPELGARTH : My only desire for troubling you with any remarks on this occasion is on account of the great determination there is on the part of the working classes to speak for themselves on these great questions. (Hear, hear). They feel that hitherto the upper and the middle classes have spoken on their behalf, perhaps too much, and that they have said too little for themselves. We hold that on the education question we have been grossly misrepresented. Lord Robert Montagu has spoken in the name of the working classes, the Archbishop of York has spoken, Lord Marlborough has spoken, and many such gentlemen—(laughter and applause)—whose good intentions I do not question, but whose knowledge of our wants and requirements I do question very much. (Hear, hear). They have said we wanted what we do not want, and they have said we are satisfied with what we are very discontented with. (Laughter and applause). The Rev. Canon Beechey says—speaking of the miners of this country—that they would strike against compulsion. Now, against that statement I protest as a falsehood. (Laughter, and cries of “No.”) Well, that is a strong word to use, I admit ; but it is untrue, and the truth should be spoken. (Laughter and applause).

The miners of this country have met in conference by their delegates, and they have declared—not that they wanted more wages, not that they wanted shorter working hours, or any special remedy of that sort ; but the first and most important thing they have declared is, that they must have compulsory education for their children. (Loud applause.) Sir, the working classes throughout the country have long declared in favour of compulsory education, and I should be sorry to be regarded as speaking in the name of those that I know little about ; but my claim in speaking for the working classes is that I have worked with them and for them all the days of my life, and I would not for one moment say on their behalf what I did not conscientiously believe they would desire me to say. (Hear, hear.) Perhaps Mr. Forster will tell me, as he has told me before, that there is a large class in whose name the representatives of our class generally cannot speak. Well, I can only say that, having worked for and with the better part of my class all my life, I am in at least as good a position as Lord Robert Montagu, or the Duke of Marlborough, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, to speak on behalf of that class ; and I say that from the miners up to the most skilled artisans of the country, they have all declared in favour of compulsory education. As an instance, I may mention that, last Thursday, I was in Glasgow ; there were 1,000 men crowded into a large room, and they were drawn together under circumstances of a most unfortunate kind, because they were engaged in discussing the whys and wherefores of a strike—not the best circumstances under which to take into consideration the question of education. But having been invited to speak to them, and having said what I had to say with reference to their dispute, I asked permission to turn that strike meeting into an education meeting. (Loud applause.) It was unanimously accorded, and, after having spoken to them, I asked them if they would embody their opinions in the form of a resolution, and the following is the resolution that was passed :—“That this meeting of operative carpenters and joiners, of Glasgow, expresses its cordial sympathy with the workmen of England and Wales in their efforts to obtain the establishment of a compulsory, secular, and free system of National Education, and we hereby pledge ourselves to use our influence to assist them in their endeavours.” Well, now, that is the way in which the working classes have spoken, to my certain knowledge, for the last fourteen years. It is now some fourteen years ago that

I first ventured to speak to a body of workmen on the question of education ; and, I care not whether it has been in connection with strikes or with any other business, I have always endeavoured to put in the thin edge of the education wedge, and I have been continually driving it home ever since. (Laughter and applause). But the one question upon which they have been unambiguous is this question of compulsion. (Applause). It is no answer to our application, to our appeal, to tell us that the Union, on the other hand, has made a counter demand ; I submit that such a list of names as the Union musters in their sheets, is not an answer to the demand on the part of the working classes of this country. It may be well for the Archbishop of York, or the Duke of Marlborough, or Lord Robert Montagu to say we do not want compulsion ; but what do we say for ourselves ? We say we want it, and what is more, I mean to say, with all respect, that in the end we will have it. (Laughter and applause). We intend to agitate until we do get it, and, further, we think we have a fair claim upon the present Government. (Loud applause). During the last election we lent our best exertions to move the public and to get that noble majority from which we hope so much in the present and in the future—(applause)—and we hope to get in return the best assistance from the Liberal party to obtain for us that which we require. On these grounds, I say, we have a claim that the present Government shall do something in the way of granting what we ask for. In conclusion, I would simply say again what I have already stated before, that hitherto our names have been used by those who know too little about us to be able to state what our wants are ; and in that view we have made up our minds, upon this and every other great question, to speak for ourselves. (Loud applause).

Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL (of Manchester) : I represent the branch of the League in Manchester and the neighbourhood, embracing nearly the whole of the manufacturing district of South Lancashire, and including a considerable portion of Cheshire and other districts in that neighbourhood ; and I have to speak, sir, upon one point on which Mr. Dixon has told you there exists some difference of opinion amongst the leaders of the League. I happen not to be amongst those, but I represent those who follow, and amongst them there is no difference of opinion on the subject of the freedom of schools. I have had an opportunity, as Secretary of our Manchester District Branch, to address a large number of

meetings, comprised, generally speaking, of the working classes of our district, and everywhere there has been the strongest feeling that the plan suggested by the Government is a dangerous method of meeting the difficulty with regard to the payment of fees. It has been felt that, by the plan proposed in the Government Bill, there would be the greatest danger of introducing a pauper spirit where it does not yet exist—(applause)—while if the schools were opened free to all classes of the community, and all were placed upon an equal footing, there would be no danger of sapping the independence of the community. But, on the other hand, if you do make it compulsory upon those whose circumstances are poor to come before a Board and show their poverty, and prove it, in order to escape the payment of as small a sum as sixpence per week, you have certainly done that which will undermine their sense of independence, and teach them to apply to Boards for help in matters connected with their personal expenditure. (Applause). And, sir, as we believe that independence of the population will be best preserved by putting the maintenance of the schools upon the local rates and upon the Government taxes, and as we find the people nowhere averse to an increase of the rates in this direction—for they are well aware of the economy that it will be in so many others—we claim that, as these schools should be entirely supported by public money, the public should be entitled to their free use at all times. (Applause.)

Mr. ILLINGWORTH (of Bradford, M.P. for Knaresborough, : Mr. Gladstone, my Lord de Grey, and Mr. Forster,—I have been deputed to speak to the mode in which it is proposed to deal with the religious difficulty in this Bill, and I believe I am giving utterance to the convictions of the great Nonconformist bodies in this country, and not of them only, but of all that worthy section of Episcopalian and other Churches who join with us in all Liberal movements, when I express a strong feeling of regret that there is not a clear enunciation of sound principle in the Bill upon ecclesiastical and religious matters, when the groundwork which was laid down in the last session of Parliament seems to have been forgotten both in its inception and in its results ; and that, further, between the two parts of the Bill—one part having reference to existing schools, and the other to the schools to be created by public money, and to be directly under public control—there ought to have been a greater distinction drawn than that which

prevails in the Government Bill. Dissenters will be disposed to recognise rights in existing schools on the part of a class which it would be impossible they could consider for one moment in rate-created and publicly-managed schools ; but, so far as the existing schools are concerned, the universal feeling is that nothing of the character of a Conscience Clause, according to its present or almost any possible acceptation, will be of the slightest use. (Hear, hear.) I wish to draw attention to this fact, that there is in existence what is called a national system of education in Ireland, governed by national conscience, and that in that system the religious rights of the minority have been protected. And why? Because the minority of Ireland happen to be connected with the governing body in England, and therefore it is that their rights have been thought of and effectually guarded. Now, we ask a reference on the part of the Government to the working of that measure, and to the particular provisions of the Irish system ; and we say surely, after having done, as Nonconformists, what we did last session towards the bringing about of that happy condition in Ireland in which the State minds its own business and leaves the religious bodies to manage theirs—(applause)—we ask that in England equal rights may be conceded, and that not suing *in forma pauperis*—(hear, hear)—nor any longer accepting the crumbs that fall from the table—(applause)—but as sitting ourselves at the table, we claim equal rights. (Loud applause.) I have the honour of being one of the constituents of my right honourable friend Mr. Forster, and no one can have a higher regard for him than I have, and, indeed, for all the members of the Cabinet. I believe they are about the best men that ever a party was asked to follow. (Loud applause.) But, at the same time, that does not exclude us from stating with great respect, but with great candour, our demands upon this question, and we say it is impossible for any satisfaction to ensue from the carrying of this measure, because it does not provide for that separation of religious teaching which I have before pointed out. With that the demands of the Dissenters will cease. They will ask equal rights with all other religious bodies, and they look forward to a time when a controlling national system of education shall educate all the children of the land. (Loud applause.)

The Rev. F. BARHAM ZINCKE (Chaplain to the Queen): Mr. Gladstone, my Lord de Grey, and Mr. Forster,—Mr. Mundella

says that this is not a Nonconformist question. I rise as a member of the Established Church, and as the Chairman of the Ipswich Committee, upon which two other clergymen of the Established Church sit, to state that it is our opinion that the time has now come when the question of religious teaching should be settled in a different manner from that by which it is proposed to be settled in this Bill. We think that that time has come, because to whatever part of the country we look we see indications in favour of our opinions. (Applause.) I need not enter into particulars. We know that it is so in Wales, we know that it is so in Scotland, we know that we must do nothing in this country which will endanger the national system in Ireland—(applause)—we know that large bodies of the inhabitants of this country, such as Nonconformists and the artisan class, whom we have represented here to-day, are in favour of dealing with the religious question in a manner different from that in which it is dealt with by this Bill. We know that if it is dealt with in the manner proposed, a variety of great evils will immediately follow; we know that it will produce an enormous amount of animosity—(hear, hear)—and of ill blood in every borough and in every rural district in the country. We know, too, when we look at what is passing in our great English Universities, and what we have lately heard coming from Trinity College, Dublin, that people's minds are changing upon this subject; and with reference to my own mind, speaking as a member of the Established Church, I should feel no fear for the cause of religion or for the cause of the Established Church, not merely if we went as far as it is proposed to go, but even if we went further—as far as appears to be required by the principality of Wales. (Applause.) I think that the strength of the Church does not consist in arrangements which were made centuries ago, and have come down to us from a time when the political situation was very different from that of the present day, and when all the conditions of the question were very different. But it must depend upon the estimate in which the Church is held by the people; and if religious teaching is separated from secular, then the country will feel that there is a great work to be done by the clergy, and I believe that in the present temper of the clergy they would do it heartily. What would be the result? Why, then the people would feel more respect and more gratitude and more affection for the clergy than they do at the present. That would

form a secure basis on which to rest the Establishment, and that is the only basis upon which, I think, in these days it can stand. (Loud applause.)

The Rev. CHARLES VINCE (Nonconformist Minister) : Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Forster, and Lord de Grey,—I should like to say that the treatment of the religious difficulty has been put as the last point to be spoken upon to-day, not because we consider it the least important, but because we consider it the most important. Many of us feel that the proposed treatment of the religious difficulty is so unsatisfactory, that even if the other matters we object to were adjusted to meet our wishes, we should still be constrained to deprecate the passing of the Bill. (Applause.) I should like, further, to say that our position of antagonism to Her Majesty's Government is one that we did not anticipate, and now we are forced into it we deeply lament it. Nothing, indeed, but the strength and depth of our convictions as to the mischievous results which will follow if this Bill becomes law in its present form, would have induced us to come here in opposition to a Ministry whose advent to power was with some of us the greatest political joy of our life. (Applause.) I would respectfully urge that the religious difficulty is not met in the Bill, but is practically ignored. The Imperial Parliament is asked not to decide the matter, but to pass it on to a number of local Parliaments, in which probably it will be perpetually discussed, but never finally settled. (Applause.) We cannot see that there is the slightest restriction put upon the power of the School Boards. They are at liberty, in establishing schools, to make them of what theological colour and complexion they please, provided there is a Conscience Clause ; and, having determined to establish schools of such a sectarian character as they deem fit, they have power to rate all the inhabitants of the district for the maintenance of the schools. The School Board in each district will be a Convocation—not with the semblance of power, but with the reality of power. (Applause.) It will be an ecclesiastical council, with authority to determine what particular creed shall be exalted and endowed as the creed of the State school in that particular district. I would submit that no municipal or parochial body was ever before entrusted with such powers. A body invested with these prerogatives by the Imperial Parliament cannot be annually elected without strife and bitterness. It has been said that this will be

the Church-rate contest over again. It will be so, with a very important addition. The vestries in the Church-rate contests had to decide nothing about the services to be performed or the doctrines to be taught; they had only to decide whether the parish should be rated for the maintenance and repair of the fabrics of the Episcopal Church. The School Board will have to decide what doctrines shall be taught, and, therefore, it is the Church-rate contest over again, with more important issues to be determined, and, consequently, with greater danger of party strife and bitterness. (Hear, hear.) We feel, sir, that our fears cannot be denounced as chimerical. It cannot be said that we are going simply upon conjecture, because there is the history of the past to guide us. It has been well said that "History is the Statesman's book of prophecy." With the history of the Church-rate contest in our hands, one needs far less than a Statesman's sagacity to foresee what must be the issue of these contests for the election of a body invested with the extraordinary functions which I think I have fairly described. (Applause.) We feel, sir, that the Conscience Clause does not meet the difficulty. There is one most important class for whom no Conscience Clause is proposed. There are two parties to be affected by these schools—the children who will go to them, and the ratepayers who will have to support them. Now, there is no Conscience Clause provided for the protection of the ratepayers; and if, as is extremely probable in certain districts, the rate-supported school should be a sectarian school, then, as Mr. Chamberlain has said, the minority will be taxed to support the teaching of the religion of the majority. It is very certain that, if that state of things is brought about by an Act of Parliament, we shall have distraints for school rates as we used to have distraints for Church rates. I fear there are many who would feel bound to take that determined stand, because it is generally considered that the time is passed by for ever for any man in England to be directly taxed for the teaching of another man's religion. (Applause.) I would, moreover, respectfully submit that it is not merely contests between Nonconformists and Episcopalians that are to be dreaded. I need not say that the differences of opinion which have always been more or less latent in the Episcopal Church are now developed into great prominence, and are held and maintained with great earnestness. It is quite likely that, in certain districts, in the

election of a Board there will be contests between different parties in the Episcopalian Church, as well as contests between Nonconformists and Episcopalians. (Laughter and applause.) English Christendom does not increase in uniformity of opinion. (Laughter.) I believe it does increase in unity of spirit. It seems to us that the proposal of Her Majesty's Government for the treatment of the religious difficulty will aggravate the evils incident to diversities of opinion, and will aim a deadly blow at that charity of spirit which increasingly prevails amongst all religious parties in this country. (Loud applause.)

The Right Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE: Mr. Dixon and gentlemen, —On behalf of my colleagues, Lord de Grey and Mr. Forster, and on my own behalf, I wish to say that I have had great pleasure in receiving, from so many sources, gentlemen of so much weight and ability, and so various (if I may so say) in colour upon many matters, and hearing from them the expression of their views. You are much too well aware of the gravity of the question at issue, and of the necessity of weighing with very great care every resolution of the Government upon them, to complain, I am quite sure, if I say that I think our business on this occasion is to take the expression of your views for careful scrutiny and consideration. (Applause.) But I should wish to be quite sure that, as far at least as you are disposed to carry the matter, I understand the nature of them; and I admit that nothing can be clearer than that you take great objection to several of the provisions that are contained in the Government Bill. (Laughter.) But at the same time, I listened with great comfort and satisfaction, not only to the general expressions of good-will which you gave us—I am sure beyond our deserts—(cries of “No”)—but likewise to the declaration of Mr. Chamberlain, who I may consider as in some sense being your chairman—the representative of you all—who did not hesitate to state that he thought in other matters, outside the limit of your objections, the Bill may fairly be regarded as “a noble measure.” That admission on the one side—or rather that avowal, for I won't call it an admission—together with the frank statement of your difficulties upon the other, affords, I think a basis upon which we cannot but hope that by our united efforts, and by a spirit at once of firmness and conciliation in all quarters, we shall be able to work out a result of which I won't anticipate the precise con-

dition and details at present, because you know very well that we have other matters in hand—(laughter)—which for the moment, and for a few weeks to come, perhaps, will afford us plenty of care and occupation. But now, with regard to your particular views upon the points that have been raised, there are two upon which I should, for the satisfaction of my own mind (I don't know whether Lord de Grey and Mr. Forster would like to put any other question), like to be clear as to what your views are. I have not quite distinctly gathered the manner in which you would propose to deal with existing schools. You have stated, I think, very distinctly, through the mouths of several speakers, that you do not approve of the Conscience Clause inserted in the Bill; not so much on account of the particular form of that clause, but because you mistrust altogether, and are inclined, I think, almost to repudiate—(applause and laughter)—anything in the nature of a Conscience Clause. (Applause.) Now, if that be so, do I understand that you, Mr. Dixon, or Mr. Chamberlain, as far as you can venture to speak, wish me to understand that in dealing with existing schools all through the country, your term of dealing with them would be that they should receive no aid from rates—(a voice, "Or taxes")—or from the Privy Council—(cries of "No, no")—that they should receive no aid from rates excepting upon the terms of conforming to your basis; so that the basis of all schools aided by rates should be one and uniform throughout the country? (Hear, hear.) Do I understand that to be the opinion of the meeting generally?

MR. DIXON: I, perhaps, had better tell Mr. Gladstone what, so far as I know, is the prevailing sentiment with reference to the existing schools. It is, that there should be separate religious teaching, as a condition of the further grants which it is proposed under this Bill to make to them; and that with reference to the new schools which may be provided out of the rates, those schools shall be entirely unsectarian. (Applause.)

MR. GLADSTONE: Then the existing schools might differ from the new schools, in respect of their having separate religious teaching?

MR. DIXON: Of their own denomination.

MR. MUNDELLA: At separate hours.

MR. GLADSTONE: I understand that: but that teaching must be confined to particular hours. (Applause.) Then, with regard to the

power of the Local Boards as to religion : certainly, I think if any one objection has been taken more strongly and broadly than another, it has been both to the amount and the kind of that power. That has been made perfectly clear to my mind. But I have not gathered with equal clearness what it is that you would substitute for it. The principles are, as I understand, that education is to be free, or, for the sake of avoiding ambiguity of words, gratuitous. (Applause.) I understand from Mr. Dixon there is some difference of opinion, but that the bulk of you are united upon that subject. (Applause.) But with reference to the compulsory principle, I have not understood from Mr. Dixon or any speaker, that there was a difference of opinion among you. (Cries of "None.") With respect to the question of the power of Local Boards as to religion, what am I to understand would be your basis? Where would you draw the line between the school that is secular and the school to which you would object on the ground of its being what is now termed sectarian? Would anything whatever in the nature of religion be permissible in your schools, or would it not? The reason I put the question is that I think it one of very great importance, because it has been stated that the view of the League (I do not pretend to be accurately informed, and I only ask for information) is that the Holy Scriptures might be read in the schools provided they were not explained. Now, only for the sake of greater clearness, I will put it according to the old story of the three courses. Here are Holy Scriptures read and explained; Holy Scriptures read and not explained; and simple secular instruction, without any reading of the Scriptures at all. ("The last! the last!" and loud cheers). I do not know whether Mr. Dixon or Mr. Chamberlain is authorised to speak upon this point in the name of the League; but, if they were, I think it would be of advantage to us to know. In stating those three courses I have not at all wished to preclude him or any other gentlemen from stating any other. I only state those as being what have prominently occurred to myself. With regard to what might be called theological or religious instruction, I have begged the question so far—I have assumed that you would include that; but with regard to any of those particular methods which it may be (or by some may be thought to) fall short of denominational instruction, it would be an advantage to us to know whether the League have an article of its creed if I may so call it, upon that

subject ; and, if so, which of those three courses it is disposed to follow.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN : Sir, in the draft of a Bill which was prepared on behalf of the League, in order to put in the clearest form their views before the country, and which was passed by the Executive Committee, subject, however, to further revision, there occurs this clause, which, to a certain extent, answers your question :—“ That in the national rate schools no creed, catechism, or tenet peculiar to any sect shall be taught in any national rate school, but the School Board shall have power to grant the use of the school rooms out of school hours for the giving of religious instruction, provided that no undue preference be given to one or more sects to the exclusion of others. But the rooms shall not be granted for the purposes of religious worship. The School Board shall have power to permit the reading of the Scriptures in the schools, provided that no child shall be present at such reading if his parents or guardians disapprove. That the time for giving such reading be before or after the ordinary school business, and that it be so fixed as that no child be thereby in effect excluded directly or indirectly from the other advantages which the school affords.” I may point out that that clause does not say anything about the explanation of the Scriptures. It was thought that was sufficiently provided for in the first part of the clause, which says that “ no tenet peculiar to any sect shall be taught ;” and it was considered, therefore, that if the reading were allowed in the schools, it must be of a perfectly unsectarian character. It is, however, only fair that I should say, before I sit down, that although that was the clause as adopted provisionally by the Executive Committee, yet there is a very strong feeling amongst the members of the League that for that clause should be substituted one requiring that secular instruction *alone* should be given in the schools which are aided by the rates. (Applause.)

MR. GLADSTONE : It would seem to me to follow that if that clause were acted upon, something in the nature of a Conscience Clause is introduced into the basis of your own Bill.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN : What is called the “time-table Conscience Clause” would have to be introduced with regard to the Bible reading, to meet the difficulty of the Roman Catholics, who use a different version of the Scriptures, as in Ireland.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Then with reference to the power (one cannot mistake the object of it) of the Board to permit the use of the room for denominational instruction out of school hours, have you no fear at all that that would introduce into the vestries the same element of religious contention which has been so vividly described by Mr. Vince?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN: The clause only permits the use of the school rooms for such purposes "provided that no undue preference be given to one or more sects."

Mr. GLADSTONE: I have not, as I have said, the least doubt about the object—it is that perfect impartiality should be observed; but with regard to the administration of the matter under the clause, it occurs to me that the very conditions of time and light available, in a district where there might be a variety of sects claiming the room, would make a considerable amount of practical difficulty; and I only ask whether you apprehend that with reference to the administration of that portion of the clause, if it were carried, you might not be open to a portion of the very same evils as those that have been foreshadowed by Mr. Vince.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN: That was apprehended by many members of the League.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Then I do not think there is anything more that I need trouble you upon. Gentlemen, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. DIXON: On behalf of the Deputation, Mr. Gladstone, I tender you our most grateful thanks for the patience with which you have received us.

The Deputation then withdrew.

NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE.

—:—

OBJECT.

The establishment of a system which shall secure the Education of every Child in the Country.

MEANS.

- 1.—Local Authorities shall be compelled by law to see that sufficient School Accommodation is provided for every Child in their district.
- 2.—The cost of founding and maintaining such Schools as may be required shall be provided out of Local Rates, supplemented by Government Grants.
- 3.—All Schools aided by Local Rates shall be under the management of Local Authorities, and subject to Government Inspection.
- 4.—All Schools aided by Local Rates shall be Unsectarian.
- 5.—To all Schools aided by Local Rates admission shall be free.
- 6.—School Accommodation being provided, the State or the Local Authorities shall have power to compel the attendance of children of suitable age not otherwise receiving education.

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