

be given a certain number of afternoons for that purpose. If the trustees refuse, then they will probably form a separate school. In practice, trouble never arises; we have no trouble in the west in that way, the trustees always agree and they have different days for giving religious instruction for the different denominations. The trustees have in all cases for years been able to come to an agreement. No separate schools, either Protestant or Roman Catholic, have been organized for the last three or four years, and even some that we had previous to 1901 have become disorganized. In 1901, there were 14 Roman Catholic separate schools in the Northwest Territories; to-day there are only 10. We in the west were boasting that we had solved this vexed problem. The Roman Catholic laity are perfectly satisfied, as far as I can learn, and there is no complaint from the Protestant majority. We are bringing together the Protestant and Roman Catholic children for the purpose of secular education to an extent never before known anywhere in Canada. Some ask the question: have you separate schools at all? To these I would say that as far as secular education is concerned, we have not, and for sectarian education we have. Now, I think that is right. It leaves the secular education with the state and the sectarian education, where it belongs, with the church and with the home. If this plan which has worked so successfully in the west for years be not adopted, what alternative have we? We are asked by some to refer the matter to the courts and to allow them to decide what is the right of the minority. Now, it is just possible, in my mind, that the courts may decide that the minority are entitled to the rights which they had by the provisions of the Northwest Territories Act of 1875, and if that were the case, we would have saddled upon us a dual system of schools which would be as unsatisfactory to the Roman Catholic minority as it would be to the Protestant majority. Personally, I prefer to take no risks, especially since granting what is asked does not interfere with the usefulness of our present school system. Then we are asked by others to leave this question entirely with the new provinces. For my part, I would be quite willing to do this. I feel sure that the governments in the provinces would be sensible enough to continue the present system, in fact, I have heard nearly all the members of the present legislature of the Northwest Territories express themselves as opposed to making any change. The premier of the Northwest Territories quite recently said that if he had the power to-morrow he would not change the present system. But we all know how at any time an agitation may be started and how the minority might then be deprived of the privileges which they have. If that were the case, we would then be confronted by a serious evil. If

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the Roman Catholic minority were deprived of the privileges they now have, what would they do? They would do just as they have done in hundreds of cases in the past. They would build, equip, and patronize church schools. These schools would have to be supported by them and they would also be compelled to pay their taxes to the public or common school. They would thus be paying double taxes, and in many cases that would be a hardship to them. But that is not the worst feature of the case to my mind. The worst feature is that since the government did not support or assist these church schools it would have no control over even the secular education given in them. Now I am so strongly in favour of the state having absolute control of the secular education of the children who are to become citizens of that state that I am willing to deprive the provinces of the power of making the mistake of totally abolishing separate schools. If separate schools were abolished in the new provinces by law we might have a condition of affairs similar to that which exists in the maritime provinces. We were told a few evenings ago by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) the condition that exists in those provinces. In localities where there is a considerable number of Roman Catholics separate schools do exist by practice if they do not by law. There you find Roman Catholic children in one school and Protestant children in another; you find Roman Catholic teachers in one school and Protestant teachers in another; you have in effect separate schools there by practice if not by law. Now to my way of thinking our system is far ahead of that. Some have compared the action of the federal government in this case to the action of the federal government in 1896. But I do not think the cases are at all similar. Then the federal government tried to force an obnoxious law upon an unwilling people; now the federal government is merely asking the Northwest to continue a system that passed its legislature unanimously and was accepted by the people and has proved for years to be thoroughly efficient. And, further, it is a law which, we all admit, the people of the Northwest Territories would themselves adopt if it were left to their own free choice. I have no hesitation in saying—and I say it after an experience of twenty-five years teaching in the public schools of Ontario and the Northwest—that we have a system of elementary education inferior to none in Canada. And I wish to say further that our system is more thoroughly a national system than even that of the United States. Our government has absolute control of the secular education of a larger percentage of the children than has the government of any state of the American union, where they boast of their national schools. Let me quote an extract from a standard work.