

Now, Sir, what authority had the Minister of Agriculture to make such a statement in this House, a statement that will be sent broadcast throughout the country? What he has said is utterly without foundation. There has been no attempt in this House, nor have I heard of any movement in this country which would justify any one in coming to the conclusion that we desire to do away with separate schools in Canada. I would like to have the minister furnish even one particle of truth to substantiate this statement. Are the members of the Conservative party trying to do away with separate schools in Ontario or in Quebec where the separate schools are guaranteed under the constitution? Or are they trying to do away with separate schools in any other province? Not a bit of it, and I regret that a minister of the Crown charged with the great responsibilities that the hon. Minister of Agriculture is charged with should have made such a statement and that it should have been spread broadcast in the way it has been over this country.

In discussing this question, as I have said, the situation in the province of Quebec has been brought into the debates on many occasions. The situation in the province of Quebec is unique. It is entirely different from the situation in any other province in this country. We have, in the province of Quebec, an almost solid French Canadian population which is Catholic and there is no mixture of Protestants and Catholics in the greater portion of that province. There is a mixture of Protestants and Catholics in the Eastern townships, but, so far as the great majority of the people are concerned, there is a solid Catholic and French population, and it is very easy in that province to regulate these matters. In making comparisons and in illustrating the situation I do not see how we can compare the situation in the province of Quebec with the situation which will exist and which does exist in the Northwest Territories or in any other province in this country.

I regret that this question has been brought into the arena of federal politics again. I regret that some means have not been taken of overcoming the difficulty in some other manner. We have before us the example of Manitoba. We know what happened in Manitoba only a few years ago and did not that illustration show us how impossible it was for this parliament to legislate with respect to this question without creating the greatest amount of friction and without leading to the debate and the agitation that we are experiencing in this country? Would it not have been better that the matter should have been left to the provinces the same as it was left to the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and could we not reasonably hope that our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens would have fared

better if the question had been dealt with in that way? The hon. Minister of Agriculture, in the course of his speech, said that he had no fear for the minority in the province of Quebec and I agree with him entirely in respect to that. I have no fear for the minority in the province of Quebec. I have no fear that any privileges or rights in respect to education which they enjoy at the present time will be withdrawn from them, and that is not because, in the British North America Act, there are certain references to the question of education in Ontario and Quebec. It is because the people of the province of Quebec are dealing with the question in a reasonable and sensible manner. It is because the government of Quebec knows better how to deal with that question than this federal parliament. But, what would be the position supposing the minority in the province of Quebec were interfered with? How would the children of the minority be educated? How could they be educated? I will take this question up for a moment in order to reason it out with my fellow-countrymen in the province of Quebec whose views perhaps differ from mine, yet whose views I respect, and to point out the different position that exists in the province of Quebec from that which exists in other portions of Canada. In the province of Quebec the schools which are Catholic and which are suitable to the conditions which exist there are religious schools. I have here some extracts from the regulations of the governing committee of the council of public instruction of that province, and I will read one or two of them.

Religious instruction is the most important of the subjects of the course of study, and it shall be taught in every school. In answering questions in the catechism, pupils shall give the exact words of the book, in sacred history lessons this is not necessary. The teacher shall follow the advice of the curé in all that concerns the moral and religious conduct of the pupils.

Elsewhere in the same set of rules we read:

Religion shall hold the first place among the subjects of the course of study and it shall be taught in all the schools.

I want to say again that I have no word of criticism to offer with respect to the regulations of the council of public instruction in the province of Quebec. I am not citing them for the purpose of criticising them, but I am citing them, because, in the discussion that has taken place, the position of the minority has been referred to so frequently and the question which I ask is: What would the minority do if the privileges which they now enjoy were taken away from them? How could their privileges be taken away from them? If their privileges were taken away from them