

ion that these hon. gentlemen, in acting as they are doing, while, in one sense, they may be acting against their own feelings, yet, in another, are acting according to the dictates of high duty. And, Sir, why cannot credit for acting from conviction and from a high sense of duty be given to hon. gentlemen on this side of the House who are supporting the same proposals? I plead for nothing else than this, Mr. Speaker, both from the newspaper press and from hon. gentlemen on both sides of this House, that they shall not impute unworthy motives to any member of this House, no matter how he speaks or how he votes on this measure. It is, I hope, to be taken for granted that no matter what position a member may take in regard to these Northwest Autonomy Bills, he is actuated in taking that position by a sense of duty, both to his constituency and to the country at large.

It has occurred to me that if a citizen of some foreign country were visiting Canada and her capital now for the first time for the purpose of inquiring into our legislative methods and ascertaining how we conduct public business, he would be curiously impressed by our treatment of these autonomy Bills; he would be curiously impressed not only by the course of the debate in this House but also by the newspaper discussion throughout the country. Two large provinces are to be added to this Dominion of Canada, two provinces mighty in area, rich in resource and rich in future promise. The enacting legislation is under advisement, the proposals of the government in reference thereto, the terms and conditions of the entry into confederation of these provinces are now before us. Surely our visitor from abroad would say: The members of the legislature considering this question will discuss large issues, such as the adjustment of the public lands, and the settlement of these mighty areas in the west. Surely such large questions as these, the conditions under which these new provinces shall enter the union, will be well pondered and considered. However, one topic alone to the exclusion of other topics in my judgment much more important, seems to be monopolizing the attention both of parliament and of the country. And what is that question? Stripped of all legal and mystifying verbiage, that question is: Shall the people of these territories, in entering the confederation as provinces, be allowed to maintain a certain school system that has been in force for more than a quarter of a century and which they themselves have moulded and formed. I think I am putting the case fairly when I am putting it thus. I say, Sir, that our visitor from abroad would surely be surprised at what I might term this phenomenon, and if he were of an inquiring and observing turn of mind he would seek some reason for the same, and I think, Mr. Speaker, he would not have far to seek; he

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would not need much knowledge of Canadian history to answer this question, he would not need any profound insight into our institutions to satisfy his mind and his curiosity as to why this one issue was monopolizing attention in this debate. He would find by a very superficial knowledge of Canadian history that agitations such as this in the past history of Canada have almost rent our country asunder; he would find that the progress and the growth of Canada has been retarded and stunted in times past by agitations arising from questions similar to this, and he would, I think, conclude and rightly conclude that those people are indeed poor friends of Canada who would lightly make a political football of an issue of this sort. And, Mr. Speaker, poor friends of Canada indeed they are. I venture to remark that in no other country where representative institutions obtain, certainly in no other part of the British empire, would such an outcry and such a commotion over a matter so comparatively trifling ever occur. When I style the issue as unimportant, I do not wish to be taken to say that the matter of education in and for these new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan is at all a trifling matter, but I do say that the aspect of the education question as presented to us is not of paramount concern, and I deal now with the practical aspect of the matter. I find in fact existing in those western territories a school system built up practically by the people themselves. I find that the local council and the territorial legislature have perfected a system that seems to meet the requirements and conditions of the west. I find that the premier of these territories has said that it is a satisfactory system, he has said that his constituents, if they had the power, would not change it to-morrow. I find that a great majority of the representatives of that western territory in this House expressed themselves in unmistakable language, is favour of its perpetuation in these two territories. I find that public opinion in the west is overwhelmingly in favour of the present system.

I shall not trouble the House by reading any long quotations but I would like to quote from a gentleman who for many years was superintendent of education in these Territories, Dr. Goggin. On the 23rd of February, speaking to an interviewer in Toronto, Dr. Goggin made certain statements as to the schools of the Northwest. He said:

The separate school in the Territories, Catholic or Protestant, is a minority school. Its course of study till 3 o'clock is identical with that in the public school. Its text books—readers in the first two classes excepted—are identical. Its teachers have the same academic standing, have undergone the same professional training as the teachers in the public school. It is subject to the same inspection and examination. It receives legislative grants on the same basis as the public school.