

schools from nine in the morning until half-past three in the afternoon. From half-past three until four o'clock religious instruction is allowed, but only such religious instruction may be given as is permitted or desired by the board of trustees. Not such religious instruction as any church may desire, not such instruction as any clergyman or priest may desire, but such religious instruction only as may be desired by the board of trustees, which board shall be elected by the ratepayers of the district. We have heard a great deal about national schools, during this debate, and it has been asserted that we should have a national school system in the west. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I am as strongly in favour of a national school system as any one can be, but I say we have to-day a national school system in the west, and that it is a national school system in every essential feature that this parliament is asked to confirm and continue. It has been well said by the hon. the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) that the only departure which these ordinances allow from what is commonly known as an absolute national school system is that the ordinances allow the minority a separate school house and a half hour's religious instruction. Now, if these ordinances provide that every power essential to a national school system is left in the hands of the government of the provinces—and I say the ordinances do provide that—and if the only limitation on the provincial government in reference to schools is that it cannot deprive the minority of the right to a separate school-house and a half hour's religious instruction, the only question left to consider is: Should the minority in the new provinces be deprived of a separate school-house and a half-hour's religious instruction, which right they enjoy to-day under the ordinances and which right they have enjoyed for years? How many hon. gentlemen who are opposing the Bill have taken the position that they should be deprived of either? The leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) does not take that position, because he says:

I argue not for separate schools and I argue not against separate schools.

The hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) does not take that position; the western members do not take that position. The hon. member for Calgary (Mr. M. S. McCarthy) says:

I am not going to be dragged into a discussion of the merits or demerits of a separate school system; that is a matter of which I know nothing.

What does the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lake) say? He says:

The present school system is the best school system for the Northwest Territories.

Mr. LAMONT.

What does the hon. member for East Hastings (Mr. Northrup) say? He says:

I say all credit to the Roman Catholics for insisting upon the teaching of religion in the schools, I think it would be better for Protestants if they did the same.

It is true, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for East Grey (Mr. Sproule) protested against a certain kind of ecclesiastical schools which he contended were pernicious, and for anything I know the schools against which the hon. gentleman protested may be deserving of his censure, but whether they are or not has no bearing whatever on the matter under discussion, because the schools against which the hon. gentleman protested, ecclesiastical schools do not exist in the Territories, and they never can exist in the Territories, if this Bill becomes law, except by the will of the provinces themselves. Under the law as it is embodied in this Bill, no church, no ecclesiastical body, no hierarchy, priest, or clergy can have any control whatever over the schools in the new provinces. The schools are left absolutely under the control of the rulers of the people with the limitation I have mentioned alone attached thereto. The minority in the Northwest claim the right to that limitation. They say that it is their bounden duty to give religious instruction to their children in the schools, that it is a matter of conscience with them and that if the Protestants do not wish to give their children religious instruction in the schools they do not have to; but for themselves they desire that they should be allowed to give their children religious instruction in the schools and they claim that as a matter of inherent right, even if they had no other grounds on which to base their claims that their conscientious scruples in this regard should be respected. But they have another ground on which they base their claim. They claim that the right to educate the children as they see fit is theirs not only as an inherent right, but as a right which was guaranteed to them by the parliament of 1875, and they claim that right should be as binding on this parliament as on the parliament of 1875. They claim that this parliament is under a moral obligation even if it is not under a legal obligation to continue to them the rights guaranteed by the parliament of 1875, and I think that on this ground their claim is entitled to consideration. It was stated in this House that in the two new provinces in the west there are 125,000 Roman Catholics, and in the Dominion 40 per cent of the whole population belong to that faith. Now, if we are to successfully carry out the principle of confederation these two classes must live together in peace, harmony and unity, and in order to preserve that peace, that harmony and that unity is it too high a price to pay to grant to the minority the right to give their children one half hour's education in the