

hon. leader of the government were turned from power, it would be impossible for the hon. leader of the opposition to form an administration, because no such administration could be formed on any other than a Protestant basis. I do not think it was necessary for that hon. gentleman to have said that. I do not think, in the face of what was said by the hon. ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) this afternoon; I do not think, in the face of what was said by the hon. Minister of Finance himself only a few minutes before, that he was justified in so speaking. Let me quote to the House what the hon. gentleman said that evening. At considerable length he recited the condition of affairs in the Northwest Territories; he recounted the various ordinances, or the result of these ordinances, minimizing as much as possible their effect, to show that after all there was no great question at issue, or, as he himself said, no principle involved in this question, and he went on to say:

I want the House to consider seriously, I submit the proposition again, that if it be true as I say, and I believe I am correct beyond the power of contradiction, that from the moment that the school opens in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon there is no difference between a separate school and a free national school, and if the only point of difference between them is that half hour of religious instruction, is there enough in it to quarrel about, and to have public meetings and agitation throughout the length and breadth of this land? I believe that the great mass of the people to-day who are joining in petitions and holding meetings have not had time to understand this question. I believe that they have an erroneous view as to what the condition in the Northwest Territories is and as to what the condition which we propose to perpetuate is. When they discover, as they will, in the light of the debate which will take place in this House now and in the next few days, when the people of Canada shall learn that we have in the west to-day a system which is practically a national school system, and that the only point of difference between us is with respect to that small matter of half an hour of religious instruction, I think the great mass of the Protestant people of Canada will say that they regret that there has been any agitation on the subject.

That, Sir, is the view expressed by my hon. friend the Minister of Finance in the presence of the right hon. leader of the government and not repudiated by him. My hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Mr. Fitzpatrick), who has had some hand in framing this Bill, spoke in this way of the educational clause:

I wanted to make the position of the people in the Northwest with respect to educational matters so clear and simple that any man might understand the clause when he read it. I said that nothing should be left to doubt, uncertainty or misconception; and in so far as I am concerned, that clause, in the terms in which it is now drafted, was prepared merely for the purpose of giving to the people of the Northwest

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Territories those things which they now have and it never was intended to go one inch beyond that.

Now, then, we have the hon. Minister of Finance declaring that the only point in dispute is one half hour's religious instruction in the schools of the Northwest Territories, with the hon. Minister of Justice declaring that in drafting the Bill he had no intention of going one inch—and you could hardly name a smaller distance—farther than to perpetuate that system which the hon. Minister of Finance himself described. I have not had any conference with my hon. friend the member for East Grey (Mr. Sproule), but, if that be the temper of the government, if the members of the government were honest in stating on the floor of this House what the real difference is, I venture to say that my hon. friend from East Grey will assent at once, and every hon. member on this side of the House will assent joyfully to such a proposition, if the only point is whether or not instructions shall be given for one half hour. If so, we say by all means give the children religious instruction for half an hour by whatever clergyman of whatever church is desired.

Now that we find this statement made, it is only fair—speaking as I do for the majority—it is only fair to consider that the majority must be influenced by hearing such statements made. But in looking about and seeing the facts that are patent to every one, let us recall some of these facts. It will not be denied that the government, although appealed to again and again from the Northwest Territories through the proper channels, to give autonomy to the Northwest Territories refused again and again, sometimes stating as a reason even for not considering the question, the absence of the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) from Ottawa. It will not be denied that the government suddenly decided to give provincial autonomy to the Northwest Territories just at the commencement of a political campaign. It will not be denied that in the interest of fair play and justice, if the government intended offering such an important proposition to the Northwest Territories the scheme itself should have been laid before the people of the Northwest Territories so that in pronouncing a verdict in the last election an opportunity would have been given them to pronounce upon that important matter. No such opportunity was given. It will not be denied that the government having thus suddenly promised in the heat of an election to give autonomy to the Northwest Territories, when the duly accredited representatives of the Northwest Territories came to Ottawa, negotiations were held which extended over a considerable period of time and which covered many subjects, but at these negotiations the question of education was never discussed and only suggested once. Can it be a surprise to any one