

the separation had been given to any other body than these religious bodies, you might say there was something else in the mind of the legislature, but as the legislature has provided to give that privilege only to the Protestant or Catholic it follows as a necessary consequence that this privilege is given where something is taught in the school is offensive to the conscience of the Roman Catholic or to the conscience of the Protestant. Let us take a concrete example. Here is a school established say by a Roman Catholic district in the province of Quebec; then their catechism will be taught, the Roman Catholic catechism, that is to say the Roman Catholic form of Christianity will be taught in that school. If there is a minority there composed say of Presbyterians, of that very fine body of men, who as they claim themselves with some pride, are fed on oatmeal and the shorter catechism, that naturally is very offensive to them, and they would have the right to secede. Take the converse proposition. Suppose there is in Quebec as there is in the eastern townships, a school where the Protestants are in the majority and then the shorter catechism is taught. That would be offensive to the Roman Catholic minority and there they would have the right to secede also. Take another case. Suppose there is a Protestant school where no religion is taught and there is a Roman Catholic minority there and they want to have religion taught, it is offensive to their conscience that no religious instruction should be given to their children: there again provision is made that they have the right to secede. There are only two kinds of education which can be given in a school, secular or religious. It is conceivable and easily conceivable that religious education which is given in a school may be offensive to the conscience either of the Catholic minority or the Protestant minority if there is such a minority in that school. But when you come to secular matters it is different. And yet, Sir, in the manner in which secular education may be given, there may be something offensive to the conscience of the minority. There can be only one way of teaching arithmetic or grammar, and that cannot offend the conscience of any one, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic. But every one knows that it is not so in regard to the teaching of history, for instance. History may be taught in a manner which will be offensive to the Protestant minority or to the Catholic minority. There are some text books of history the truth of which would not be admitted by Protestants, and there are some the truth of which would not be admitted by Roman Catholics. Under such circumstances the minority may have cause for offence in the manner in which even secular education is given, and in that case provision is made that the minority may secede. Now, I need not tell the

House, for it is known to everybody, that the Roman Catholic church has always sought to have for herself the privilege of secular education as well as religious education; and when the Act of 1875 was passed, the majority and the minority were given the privilege of having the education of their respective churches in the schools if they saw fit. That law, legally or illegally—I shall not discuss this point at this moment, but I shall do it later on—was interpreted by the legislature as conveying to the minority the right of having a separate organization for the tuition of their own children. There were two systems of education established—a system for the Protestants and a system for the Roman Catholics. This condition existed for some years, but it was a cause of great friction, and it was finally changed by the legislature, which passed an Act taking to the civil power the teaching of secular education and leaving religious education altogether apart. Now, this was a grievance to the minority. If you look at the correspondence which took place on this subject, you will find that the removal of the peculiar arrangement which existed, and which permitted Roman Catholics to have the organization of their own schools, was the grievance which was felt by them with the greatest acuteness. But the legislature thought otherwise. They were persevering in their views, and they would not yield upon that point. Let me now explain the law which has been substituted for the law of 1875. As I said a moment ago, the characteristic feature of the present law, which was enacted to take the place of the law of 1875, is this, that the legislature has separated absolutely religious education from secular education. Secular education has been made by the legislature the sole privilege of the trustees in every district. Under the ordinance, chapter 29, which contains a new clause in substitution of the old law, the state does not pretend to have the slightest control of religious education. At half past three in the afternoon the secular education is at an end, and then the trustees can come in and have whatever sort of religious education they desire. It may be the shorter catechism, it may be the Roman Catholic doctrine, it may be any of the doctrines of Protestants. But up to the hour of half past three in the afternoon the state insists upon having the control of the schools absolutely—insists upon having all the teachers certificated by the state, insists on having all the inspection done by the state, insists on having all the text books selected by the state. Whether the schools are separate or public, the state has absolute control of them to-day. Now, this is a grievance on the part of the Roman Catholic minority. They have always thought that they should have the control of their schools for secular education as well as for

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.