

Minister of Finance—they say: you constituted that territory 35 years ago; 30 years ago you established separate schools; you said when you were doing it that you intended it to be permanent; those who made speeches when the Bill was presented to parliament, said we bring this Bill to parliament because we want the people of the Northwest Territories to know what kind of institutions they are going to have, and among others they are going to have separate schools. Half a million people have gone into the Northwest Territories knowing what the laws were. Although I am not absolutely convinced by the argument made by these gentlemen, yet I know that out of that population of half a million there are 125,000 Roman Catholics, and I further know that many of these people actually went to the educational department at Regina by their authorized representatives and got copies of these school ordinances so that they might know whether they would be allowed to have separate schools before they came into the Northwest Territories. Therefore, our friends say: here is a state of affairs existing for thirty years, carried on under your direction, creating vested rights in 125,000 people who have gone there upon the strength of your guarantee. And so, with some degree of plausibility they argue: you are far more bound to maintain that state of affairs than if it had been created by the province, because you are responsible for it yourselves. Here we have two separate and irreconcilable propositions. If I talked for ever I do not think I would convince the gentlemen who do not think as I do upon this subject. I do not think I could convince them that we should leave the legislature of the Northwest absolutely free in this matter—although I am for my part convinced after the history of the question in the province of Manitoba, and from the knowledge I have of what public men in the Territories think on this whole question from beginning to end—I am firmly convinced that it would be better for the Roman Catholic people of the Northwest Territories if the legislature were left absolutely free. But, I shall never convince the gentlemen who do not think so; I shall never get them to think as I do on the question, because if I talked for a hundred years their views would be just the same as they are to-day.

I am very much inclined to think, Mr. Speaker, that they will not be able to convince me. I do not think they would be able to convince me that it would not be better that the legislature of the Northwest Territories should be free. Now, what are we going to do? We are face to face with an absolutely irreconcilable state of affairs. My hon. friend the Minister of Finance put it very well the other evening. He said: What are you going to do? what are you going to decide? The King's government must be carried on; the business of the

country must be carried on; and there is only one of two ways in which this question can be decided. The Protestant people of Canada can say to the Roman Catholic people: You cannot convince us, we cannot convince you, but there are more of us than there are of you, and we are going to vote you down. I put aside a proposition of that kind. There is no man in this government who would contemplate attempting to carry out a proposition of that kind if he had the power. Least of all would my hon. friend who leads the opposition desire to see a proposition of that kind carried out, no matter what his views on the merits of the question might be. Then, what are you going to do? What is the position of affairs going to be? You cannot make a political religious issue of these questions either for the members of this House or for the inhabitants of the Dominion of Canada; and even if you did—as my hon. friend the Minister of Finance very well said: if those who thought in this House as I do combined with me and if the result of their efforts were to drive the right hon. gentleman (the Prime Minister) from office on this question, all that my hon. friend the Minister of Finance said the other night, and much more, would be true. No greater political misfortune could happen to hon. gentlemen opposite than that they should be called upon to take office under such circumstances. Suppose it happened. Every man who knows the political history of Canada knows that we might fight about this question year in and year out for years, the political and financial progress of the country might be paralyzed, the business of the country would be blocked by the condition of affairs, and after it was all done, we should be simply where we had started, and the people would have to come together on this question and compromise their differences.

What I desire to say, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, is that I have very strong views on this question. I have not concealed those views from the members of the House. There is a certain distance that I am prepared to go in the way of compromise; I have so expressed myself to my right hon. friend the Prime Minister. To the extent which is embodied in the proposition before this House I am willing to go. I am willing to go that far because I believe that the essential principles of a first-class, thoroughly national school system are not impaired, and the taint of what I call ecclesiasticism in schools, and which in my judgment always produces inefficiency, will not be found in the school system of the Northwest under this legislation, unless the people of the Northwest choose to have it, in which case it is their business and not ours. I may say, Mr. Speaker, that I have found a very great deal of difficulty in deciding upon my course on this question. When I saw the

Mr. SIFTON.