

the power to establish such schools as they think fit. Now these words are important to remember. Under that organic law a system of schools has been established in the Northwest Territories by a series of legislative enactments, the last expression of which is to be found in the ordinances of the year 1901. It may not be unimportant however, with a view of observing and understanding the present character of the legislation in that respect which is now in existence in the Northwest Territories, to trace from the commencement the history of the development that has taken place and has resulted in the present school system. The first law which we find was an ordinance passed in 1884. This law had several important provisions. Perhaps the most important of all was that there was to be a council of education, a board of education to be composed of not more than 12 members, 6 of whom were to be Roman Catholics and 6 of whom were to be Protestants; that the board of education was to be divided into two sections, the Protestant section and the Catholic section; that each section was to have under its jurisdiction and control the management of the schools of its own denomination, the Roman Catholic section was to have under its control the management of the Roman Catholic schools and the regulation of their discipline; it was to arrange for proper examinations, guiding and licensing of teachers, to select the books to be used in the schools provided that in the case of all books having reference to religion and morals, such selection should be subject to the approval of a competent religious authority, to appoint inspectors. That was the complete power of supervision of the schools given to the Roman Catholic section of the board of education. The same thing was provided for the Protestant subsection. Another important provision was that a school district could be formed on the petition of a certain number of ratepayers within a certain area and that all schools were to be organized at once either as Protestant or Roman Catholic public schools. Another important provision was that with regard to religious instruction, that when a school system had been organized, a separate school could be organized by the minority. Another important point was that all religious instruction was to be at a certain hour under certain conditions:

No religious instruction, such as bible reading, or reciting, or reading or reciting prayers (except as hereinafter provided), or asking questions or giving answers from any catechism, shall be permitted in any public school in the Territories, from the opening of such school at nine o'clock in the forenoon, until the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon, after which time any such instruction, permitted or desired by the trustees, may be given.

Section 86 provides:

Any child attending any school, whose parent or parents or guardian, is or are of the religion

different from that expressed in the name of such school district, shall have the privilege of leaving the school room at the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon or of remaining without taking part in any religious instruction that may be given, if the parents or guardian so desire.

This school ordinance remained without any substantial alteration until the year 1887, when an important amendment was made, and in the following year, 1888 another was made in the same line, by which the provision of the Act of 1884 which required that all schools when first organized should be either Protestant public schools or Roman Catholic public schools, was repealed, and a provision was made to the contrary, namely, that all public schools should be at once organized as public schools quite independent of the religious faith of the majority. No important amendment took place afterwards until the year 1892, when a very important amendment was made. By that amendment the board of education was reorganized on absolutely different lines. The members of the executive committee and four other persons, two Protestants and two Catholics, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, were to constitute a council of public instruction. There was to be no subdivision of the council into Protestant and Roman Catholic subsections as was previously the case. There was to be only one school board, which was to have the control and management of all schools established under the Act, that is to say, public schools, separate schools, kindergartens, normal schools and teachers' institutes. That remained in force until 1901, when it was consolidated with practically no change, except that there is to-day a Department of Education, which is a department of the government, over which presides one member of the executive council, with the assistance of the council of education. That is the law of the land to-day; it is the law which is to be perpetuated, and therefore it is important that we should know what it is. Let me recapitulate the provisions of this law. By the ordinance of 1901 there is a department of the government known as the Department of Education which is presided over by a member of the executive council, with the assistance of the educational council appointed by the Governor in Council. That Department of Education has the absolute control of education without any interference at all from anybody else, whether with regard to public schools or separate schools. Public school districts are to be organized, and there may be separate schools. Then there may be religious education, and as it is important that we should know exactly what that is, let me quote from the Act in regard to it:

137. No religious instruction except as hereinafter provided shall be permitted in the school of any district from the opening of such school until one-half hour previous to its closing.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.