

tain limits. That authority for religious instruction is not confined to separate schools; it applies to all schools in the Territories. It is provided that wherever the trustees so wish, wherever the local conditions permit, there shall be religious instruction in all schools in the Northwest Territories, not in the minority schools only. Then there is a further provision that all schools may be opened with the reciting of the Lord's Prayer. Does anybody object to that? I hope not; I trust that in any case where the trustees of a school authorized that, it is not objectionable. But then there is this half hour of religious education. From the hour at which these schools open in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon they are absolutely alike; there is no difference; the teachers have the same duties, the same qualifications; the same examinations, the same course of study, the same books are prescribed by the government, the regulations are made by the government, the inspector is appointed by the government. I repeat that from the hour of opening in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon there is no shade of difference in all these schools in the Northwest Territories. So it has come to this, that we have a shade of difference as respects the half hour of religious instruction, from 3.30 to 4 o'clock. I submit, Mr. Speaker, to this House that on a question like this that half hour of religious instruction is not and should not be a cause of conflict. Where the majority of the people and the trustees are of the Protestant faith, that half hour of religious instruction will, of course, take the form of the faith of the majority; it will be Protestant religious instruction. Where the majority of the people and the trustees are Roman Catholics, that half hour of religious instruction will follow the faith of the Roman Catholic majority. In each of these cases the minority, if they wish, may have a separate school. I am firmly persuaded that the difference is so slight that if we reach a wise decision now, if we refrain from fanning the flame of political passion—I withdraw that word political, I am not discussing this from a party standpoint, and I did not intend to use that word, and I withdraw it—if we refrain from doing or saying anything which can fan the flame of religious excitement in the Northwest Territories now, my honest conviction is that the separate schools will diminish, and the free common public schools will increase. I am persuaded that the difference is so small that the mass of the people in the Northwest Territories will hardly find it to their advantage to keep it up except in a few instances. I am reminded of one point: I had forgotten to state that even with respect to that half hour, it is not a matter of obligation, but if the parents of any child disapprove of that religious instruction for that half hour, the child may withdraw. There is, therefore, liberty of conscience in the highest degree. I do not hesitate to

say, Protestant that I am, that I do not think that half hour of religious instruction given by a Roman Catholic teacher will hurt the children; I think that half hour of instruction given by a Catholic teacher to Catholic children—I think that we may reasonably feel that if there is enough of it to have any influence on the life of the child, it will make a boy a better citizen, a better Canadian. 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 is the condition which we propose to perpetuate. 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 a half 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.

My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) referred to-day to the conditions of education in the province of Nova Scotia. We are proud to-day, Sir, of the national school system in that province. We rejoice that from time to time we hear our public men of all parties and all creeds cite the province of Nova Scotia as an example of toleration and good will. The happy conditions which exist in that province have many a time been referred to by my right hon. friend the Prime Minister, who has held the people of Nova Scotia up as examples of moderation and toleration. We have a free common national system of education in the province of Nova Scotia. The principle of that system is, as I stated at an earlier stage of my speech: Thou shalt not teach any 'ism' but thou shalt teach by precept and example, the Christian virtues. This is the essential point, and happily we have got along very well. But do not make any mistake. Let no man imagine that that happy condition has been brought about without conciliation and compromise. We have no separate schools by law in Nova Scotia, but I say that we could not