

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Perhaps I may have said 'substance' as well.

Mr. SIFTON. The hon. gentleman said 'substance,' because I have it here, but if he intended to say 'principle,' I will not dispute over the word, because I think that, although my hon. friend and I may not be able to agree on many things, I could convince him that these clauses are very different. What is the effect of the clause now before us? I like the first section for one thing, although for another thing I do not. I like it, in the first place, because it is clear. I am bound to say that I think one of the things that is important, in legislation of this kind is that it shall be such that the people can understand it after it is passed, and shall not have to go into the courts and fight for years to find out what the law is. I think everybody can understand what this means

Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to separate schools which any class of persons have at the date of the passing of this Act, under the terms of chapters 29 and 30 of the ordinances of the Northwest Territories passed in the year 1901.

What does that preserve? I have read these ordinances through, and all that I can find this section to preserve—and it is an important thing—let us not exaggerate or minimize, let us know exactly what we are doing—I think that this is what we are doing and all that we are doing. This section preserves the right of the Protestant or Roman Catholic minority to have their school, a separate school in name, but a public school in fact, in a separate building if they wish. That is the right it preserves. It preserves, secondly, the right of the Protestant or Roman Catholic minority in such school to have religious teaching from 3.30 to 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The hon. gentleman from East Grey endeavoured to work on our sympathies yesterday by referring to the difficulties which some Protestant families in Quebec have, because they have to attend what is, to all intents and purposes, a denominational Catholic school, and I understood the hon. gentleman to be arguing against the proposal which is contained in this Bill when he cited that fact as an illustration of the evils of separate schools.

Mr. SPROULE. I wish to say to the hon. gentleman that I never contemplated advancing that as an argument at all, but I gave it as an answer—

An hon. MEMBER. Did anybody give him credit for an argument?

Mr. SPROULE. If I am entitled to any respect from that side of the House, I ought to be at least able to say what I intended. I was giving it as an answer to the statement of the Prime Minister, who had said that in Quebec the Protestants have nothing to complain of. I was not advancing it as

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an argument with reference to the Northwest Territories.

Mr. SIFTON. If my hon. friend did not intend his argument to apply to the conditions of the Bill it will not be necessary for me to answer, but I may go on to say that if anybody else had in his mind any idea that difficulties of that kind would arise, he may disabuse his mind of the idea, because they cannot arise under the system which is proposed in this Bill. In the first place, there is no such thing as a denominational school. Whether it is a separate school or a public school, a Catholic separate school or a Protestant separate school, it is a secular school from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Then if the religious teaching which is given is contrary to the faith of the parents of a child attending it, there is a conscience clause that the child does not need to remain. So that there is absolutely no reason why any person should be embarrassed by the practice of the school system which is actually in effect in the Northwest Territories under these ordinances.

Now, something has been said—a good deal has been said—in the press about subsection 2, and I wish to say a word about that. The House, possibly, may well understand that I am not particularly enthusiastic about subsection 1, which provides for the establishment of separate schools in the Territories, as I would not be enthusiastic about any provision establishing separate schools of any kind. Only, I am not addressing the House with the idea of convincing hon. members that I am an enthusiastic supporter of this subsection 1, for I am not. But, if we are to have subsection 1, if we are to have a provision which allows the separate schools to be established, then, surely, Mr. Speaker, we ought also to have a provision making it certain that the separate schools may have in them the possibility of being efficient schools. Why, Sir, it would be a crime against education to crystallize in the law of the Northwest Territories a provision that such and such people should have the right to organize such and such schools as public schools and not to protect them in the right to get the money which will make those schools efficient and enable them to advance and increase in efficiency in accordance with the desires of the persons in charge of them. I hesitate to vote, I find great difficulty in bringing myself to vote, for subsection 1. But it seems to me obvious that subsection 1 without subsection 2 would be much more objectionable than the whole section is as it stands. I should think that, without subsection 2, the proposition of the government would be much more objectionable than it is. If I have made myself clear, it will be seen that my observations are addressed to those who look upon subsection 2 as a very outrageous interference with the control of public funds by the legislature of the province. It is an interference—