

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have in the Northwest Territories at the present time, this system of public schools which was established by the Act of 1892 and referred to in the statements which I have read. I have endeavoured from a careful study of the ordinances: ordinance 29, which provides for the establishment of the schools, ordinance 30 which provides for the method of school assessment and ordinance 31 which provides for the distribution of the legislative grant—having reference to the efficiency of the schools and paying by results; rewarding the school which is efficient at the expense of the school which is not efficient, and thus introducing a good and sound principle into the education of the Territories—I have endeavoured by a careful study of these ordinances to come to clear and definite conclusions as to the main characteristics of the school system which exists there at the present time.

Now, what are the characteristics of this school system? My hon. friend the Minister of Customs discussed the matter with great clearness last evening, and read from the ordinances to give the House a definite idea of what the condition of affairs was. Let me give what I conceive to be an accurate resumé of the principles which are enforced and carried out by these ordinances. We have one normal school with uniform normal training for all teachers, and when I say all teachers, I mean teachers of all schools, separate and public; uniform curricula and courses of study for all schools of the same grade; uniform text books for all schools; uniform qualification of teachers for all schools; complete and absolute control of all schools as to their government and conduct, by the central school authority set up by the legislature under the ordinances; complete secularization of all schools between 9 o'clock in the morning and 3.30 in the afternoon, except that any school, if the trustees so desire, may be opened with the Lord's prayer; distribution of the legislative grant to all schools according to educational efficiency on principles set out in chapter 31.

Then, where there is a public school, the minority, Protestant or Roman Catholic, may organize a separate school; but every separate school is subject absolutely to all the foregoing provisions, and is in every sense of the term a public school. If the Protestants are in the minority in a district, their school is called a separate school; if the Catholics are in the minority in a district, their school is called a separate school; but both are public schools. They are absolutely similar save for one distinction: where the trustees are Protestant, there is Protestant teaching from half-past three to four, and where the trustees are Roman Catholic there is Roman Catholic teaching from half-past three to four. That is absolutely the only distinction between these schools.

Now, we are about to form two provinces,

Mr. SIFTON.

and we have to deal with the educational subject. My right hon. friend the Prime Minister says it was his intention by the legislation which he proposed, to continue the existing system in the Northwest Territories; and I accept that statement, of course, as expressing his intentions. My hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Hon. Chas. Fitzpatrick) the other evening accepted, as I understood, the responsibility for drawing the clause which contained the educational provisions, and I understood him also to say that the intention was to continue the existing state of affairs. Nobody would think of holding the Prime Minister responsible for the exact drafting of this clause, and I suppose it is not likely that my hon. friend the Minister of Justice drew it either. But I am bound to say, Mr. Speaker, that when my hon. friend the Minister of Justice employed a draftsman to draw this clause, with instructions to maintain only the existing state of affairs in the Northwest Territories, the draftsman either wholly misunderstood his instructions or he possessed a most remarkable faculty for covering things which were not covered by his instructions. I propose to devote three or four minutes to an examination of this clause for the purpose of showing what I think it means. I am not going to address a lengthy legal argument to the House on this subject. When this clause was introduced by the government of which I was then a member, I conceived it to be my duty to protest against it, and to carry my protest to the extent of laying down the seals of office. I have no regret for the action I took. I think I then understood what the clause meant, and I think I now understand what it means; and while it is perhaps of no moment whatever to convince anybody who may have any doubts on the subject, or who may be difficult to convince as to what this clause means, it is unquestionably my duty, speaking to this House on this occasion, to say what I thought this clause meant, and what I think it means now, and why I felt called upon to make the protest that I did. In the Bill for the purpose of creating the territory of Saskatchewan, section 16, is the educational clause. It consists of three subsections. It says in the first place:

The provisions of section 93 of the British North America Act, 1867, shall apply to the said province as if, at the date upon which this Act comes into force, the territory comprised therein were already a province, the expression 'the union' in the said section being taken to mean the said date.

Now, what does that subsection do? It applies to the new provinces the provisions of section 93 of the British North America Act, which we all know by heart:

In and for each province the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to education.