

Mr. FITZPATRICK. In what respect do we limit the power of the province?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. By declaring, as you do declare, that a power which is vested in the trustees by a law of the Territories cannot be taken away by the legislature of the new province. If you go that far, then you limit the power of the legislature, not only in school districts where the majority is Catholic, but you limit the power of the provincial legislature where the majority is Protestant.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Would it be equally correct to say that we perpetuate the right to religious instruction which is now vested in the trustees in a majority or a minority district?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Quite so.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. That is the intention, to continue the religious instruction which they now have.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. If the government intend that, well and good; but I thought the intention was to limit the powers of the provincial legislature so far as the minority is concerned. If you are going further, limiting the power of the legislature so far as the Protestant majority in any particular district is concerned, then I think you are going beyond any argument advanced by the government in support of this resolution. You started in the first place by protecting the minority, whether Protestant or Catholic, in every school district. You go beyond that now for the purpose of protecting, as I understand, the Catholic majority in any particular school district, but you do not, by any argument hitherto advanced, have any reason for limiting the power of the provincial legislature beyond that. You do limit it beyond that, because you prevent the provincial legislature from dealing with religious instruction in districts where the Protestants are in the majority. That power must for ever be in the trustees, although it may be the opinion of the vast majority of the people of that province that that power should be vested in some other body, in the Commissioner of Education, the Council of Education or some other tribunal to be appointed. That is all I have to say, if I make myself clear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I understand the point.

Mr. MONK. I understand the point. I wonder why the suggestion of the member for Saskatchewan (Mr. Lamont) is not made applicable to the cases where the majority is Catholic only.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Why?

Mr. LAMONT. Why should it be?

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Why should we amend the ordinance?

Mr. MONK. The objection of the leader of the opposition would disappear. His objection is that in order to meet the objection referred to throughout this discussion we are making the law so general that the legislature will not be able to legislate in any respect regarding the control of instruction in the schools, even where these schools are in a district with a Protestant majority.

Mr. LAMONT. If it is a good principle to grant to the Roman Catholics the privilege of having a half-hour's religious instruction in the school, I, as a Protestant, do not see why it is not a good principle for the Protestants.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. It may be.

Mr. LAMONT. So far as the amendment I had the honour to move is concerned, my object is to continue the present law to the public schools, Protestant as well as Catholic. I want the school law of the new provinces to contain a provision that for all time to come there shall be granted to each school district the right to have religious instruction in that school district if they think fit, and that applies to Protestants as well as to Catholics. There are some 150 Catholic schools to some 1,050 Protestant public schools, and that provision I believe to be a wise one to apply to all schools and not only to one class of schools. I am satisfied that at the present time the legislature would not change it, but the 250,000 people who now constitute the estimated population of each of these two provinces will be but a small percentage of the millions who will find homes on our prairies, and it may be that future legislatures, elected by the immigrants from all quarters of the world, may not be of the opinion that the inculcation of religious and moral principles in the schools is necessary to the welfare of the state, and if not this amendment is desirable. I am satisfied that it is a wise provision to leave in the hands of the trustees, Protestant or Catholic, I do not care which they are, the right to give the children of that school section religious instruction if they desire from 3.30 o'clock to 4 o'clock. That is all the amendment covers. That is what it was intended to cover; if it does not cover that, I hope it will be made to do so.

Mr. INGRAM. I want to understand this, too. As I gather, our hon. friends from the Northwest are opposed to any interference with the school system of the Northwest Territories, and they desire the matter of education to be left entirely in the hands of the local legislature. I understood the hon. gentleman from Saskatchewan (Mr. Lamont) to say that he is in favour of the present school system in the Northwest Territories. He is in favour of perpetuating public and separate schools for all time to come. That is his position, and he also