

ther any one could see those plans; and if it were necessary to ask that question, what made it necessary, except that some one was looking for information contained in the plans and had gone to the deputy minister to ask for the information, and out of that fact had arisen the necessity for the inquiry. At what stage would it be premature for the hon. gentleman to approve of these plans or to investigate them? Can it be said to be contemplated by section 122 of the Railway Act, that the minister, the moment he gets the plans that are to be prepared under that section, can seal them up so that neither he, nor his colleagues, nor parliament, nor the railway company themselves can see them or inspect them? If that be so for a period of seven months, why may it not be so for ten years? I hope the hon. gentleman will accede to the reasonable request from this side of the House, and will show cogent reasons why, at any rate, he should not loosen, with regard to these particular plans, that principle which he says has been inaugurated in his department, and that he will see his way to allow this motion to pass.

Mr. FOSTER. Just one word more, if the House will allow me. If the First Minister were here I would make an appeal to him with reference to the principle involved in this matter; as he is not here, and the Minister of Finance I imagine, is leading the House, I will say to him that I think it would be a pity if affirmation were to be made that the House assembled here has not a right to have a document such as this brought down if it wishes it. If this motion is negative, of course it will affirm that principle. I call the attention of the Minister of Finance to the fact that I do not think any real reason has been given why the public interest would be harmed if they were brought down at once. Then if we have not a reason given, is it not rather perilous to affirm a principle which in effect would be this, that the House is not master of the documents which one of its servants, in the form of a member of the government, has in his possession, and has kept sealed in his possession for months?

Mr. FIELDING. I am afraid that I cannot agree with my hon. friend that the House is about to affirm any dangerous principle. Certainly that is not our intention; nor is it the intention of this House to affirm the principle that parliament has not a right to every public document in relation to all public affairs. But it is a question of discretion. It is a constant practice for a minister, here and elsewhere, when a motion is made for papers, to say that in his judgment it is not wise to submit those papers to the House.

Mr. FOSTER. Is that sufficient without a reason?

Mr. BOYCE.

Mr. FIELDING. The minister has given a reason. My hon. friend may not accept the reason. For myself I would say that any unfinished transaction might not necessarily be a proper matter to submit to the House. Any matter which is pending and left unfinished might properly be withheld from the knowledge of the public until the discussion is completed. In that aspect of the question, the minister does not say that the House has no right to these papers, he simply says that in his judgment, and for the reasons he has given, he thinks it would not be wise to bring these papers down at the present time. There is no danger in affirming a principle of that character. We are only affirming what is done in all parliaments under the British system for reasons which, in the mind of the minister, he deems to be sufficient. Sometimes hon. gentlemen might regard them as insufficient, but that is always a matter of opinion and judgment.

Motion negatived on division.

#### PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES—PRE- SENTATION OF DOCUMENTS.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). The House will hardly desire to proceed further with the Orders. Before moving the adjournment, if any hon. gentleman has nothing else to bring up, I desire to submit some papers to the House. I lay on the table a copy of the School Ordinances of the Northwest Territories, chaps. 29, 30 and 31, passed in 1901. I also lay on the table a memorandum giving a summary of legislation relating to subsidies to the provinces. These are documents which have been asked for by hon. gentlemen opposite. They are both printed, and will be in the distribution office to-night or to-morrow morning. I have sufficient copies to-night to hand a few around. I also submit a statement showing the areas of the provisional districts of the Northwest Territories, and other information with respect to lands in the Northwest Territories, numbers of settlers and so forth, these being papers which were asked for. They are not in printed form, and I think it would be better to suspend the rule at once and ask the House to agree to have them printed. I would therefore move that the rule be suspended for the purpose of having these printed.

Mr. FOSTER. Is that all? Is there nothing else to come before the House in connection with the Northwest Territories?—Because the First Minister promised that before the sitting closed we would have something with regard to amendments to the Bill.

Mr. FIELDING. Immediately on the adjournment I will send to my hon. friend a copy of the amendment, which will be placed on the notice paper. I do not think I