

of the Bill? I yield to no one in appreciation of the great abilities of these gentlemen and of the experience of some of them, but while conceding everything that can be conceded in that regard, it was hardly fair to pass over the ex-Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Finance and the representatives of the people of the Northwest Territories and to follow solely the advice of these gentlemen and to seek solely their assistance.

I have no more to say at present. I trust that my right hon. friend will recede a little from the position which he took the other day, and that he will give us some reason for the very extraordinary course which he has pursued in the introduction of this Bill, that he will perhaps be good enough to advise us, although he has not seen fit to do so up to the present time, whether or not any amendments to the Bill have been under the consideration of the government. Whenever I have asked that question before, my right hon. friend has told me with a great air of wisdom that amendments can be made to any Bill. Nearly all of us on this side of the House were aware of that before the right hon. gentleman told us. There may have been one or two hon. gentlemen to whom that came as a refreshing piece of news, but nearly all of us were aware of it before. That was not the question I asked. The question I asked and to which I have a right to get an answer is this: Has the government under consideration at the present time any amendments to the Bill which was brought down in such extraordinary haste three weeks ago and in the progress of which not one step has been taken since? In addition to that perhaps my right hon. friend will be good enough to enlighten the House as to the personnel of the members of the administration who constituted the committee of council which was appointed to deal with this question. We have nothing official before the House in so far as I am aware with regard to it. I understand from the documents that my right hon. friend was a member, that the hon. Postmaster General was a member, and I would gather also that my hon. friend the Minister of Justice must have been a member, because it would be absolutely indispensable to have the assistance of his very great legal ability and experience. Were there any other members of this sub-committee and if so, who were they? Was there any gentleman specially appointed to represent the interests of the people of the Northwest Territories? Was there any gentleman appointed to consider this question from the standpoint of the maritime provinces, because, as the hon. ex-Minister of the Interior has well pointed out, this is a matter which must be considered not only from the standpoint of the interests of the people of the Northwest Territories but from the standpoint of the

interests of the entire country? Now this would appear not an unreasonable demand, and I trust my right hon. friend departing in that regard from his practice on the last few occasions on which I brought this matter to the attention of the House, will really on this occasion give the House information upon the subjects which I have ventured to refer to.

There has just been placed in my hands a copy of a journal which is sometimes supposed to be in the secrets of the government; which is sometimes supposed to contain statements that have an official inspiration. I observe that this journal, quoting from the Montreal organ of a member of the administration, gives currency to a rumour that some question or questions in connection with this Bill are to be submitted for the consideration of the Supreme Court. If my right hon. friend's view, expressed when he introduced this Bill, is a sound one—and I presume it was not taken without due consideration—of course it would not be necessary to submit any question to the court, but perhaps he may have had new light on the subject since he made his speech. However that may be, I do respectfully ask the Prime Minister to give the House some information with regard to all these matters, and especially to inform us why it was that he did not see fit to consult these gentlemen from the Northwest Territories who were in Ottawa at his call and who were supposed to represent the voice and the desires of the people of the west.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) has stated that it would have been convenient for him to speak on this matter yesterday as he had given me notice, and that I had asked him to postpone his remarks until this afternoon, because I had an engagement after the dinner hour before which the question could not have been reached. I knew I could appeal to the courtesy of my hon. friend, because he and I have always managed these matters between us to our mutual satisfaction. I thanked my hon. friend, and I thank him all the more because I appreciate that in agreeing to my request to postpone this discussion, I deprived him of the pleasure of bringing forward once again extract after extract from his scrap book. Judging from the extract after extract which my hon. friend has read, and the innuendo after innuendo which he has given utterance to, my hon. friend has come to the conclusion that this Bill has been too hastily prepared. As an evidence of this hasty preparation he tells us that the Bill though given a first reading on the 21st of February has not yet been called for second reading. It is true that we have not yet moved the second reading of the Bill, and it makes my heart sink within me to think that whenever we defer to the wishes of my hon. friends on