

portance than that, he will not give to that portion of the country its minister with geographical responsibility as well as constitutional responsibility.

Now, a circumstance occurred not long ago which rather lends force to the argument and which affects some men in the right hon. gentleman's cabinet. What did we find in October of last year? We found the right hon. gentleman coming down to the province of Ontario, getting down upon bended knees before a luminary of the law and saying to him in so many English words: My dear Mr. Aylesworth I have colleagues and representatives in the government from the province of Ontario who have been with me for some time, but I find that in Ontario my hold is growing gradually weaker. I am not only not increasing the strength, but I see that strength diminishing. I do not want to turn these out to pasture, poor as they are, and so I must have you come in and save the remnant in the province of Ontario. The right hon. gentleman needed some strength, and if ever there was a practical illustration of that need we have it this year. The lynx-eyed minister, the Postmaster General (Sir William Mulock), is not here, and I suppose I may venture to mention him to-day without his inflicting upon this House that oft-repeated story repeated so well along the concessions and side lines of North Ontario, learned and conned and repeated so often up and down the province of Ontario, and repeated so often in this House, that it is becoming a tale oft-told, with the little interest that attaches to a tale oft-told. I suppose that I may refer to the fact that he slept at his post while the most important legislation was being performed for these orphan territories in the Northwest. Is there not some reason why there should be a brave, bright, strong, wide-awake man brought in from the west who will not sleep at his post, but who will know what is going on and see that his geographical ministerial responsibility is fully exercised in the representation of the people in the country from which he comes. If the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) can keep constitutionally portfolios open for one month, he can keep them open for two, three or four months. He was the gentleman who, in opposition, pleaded always for a full cabinet, for the ministerial responsibility to be properly divided and distributed, and that there should be at the post of power in each department a responsible head. He knows as well as we all know that that is proper constitutional doctrine, and that it is necessary for the good government and good administration of the country. Yet he does not fill the vacant position, and he does not give us any valid reason why.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES (Victoria and Haliburton). The First Minister has referred

to the fact that after the death of the late Hon. Thomas White the portfolio of the Interior was vacant for some time. That is true, but he also knows that at that time a new principle in constitutional government, the principle that there must be a responsible minister for the district, had not been engrafted on the constitution of this country. The First Minister has given us that new line in the constitution. At that time also there was no great crisis in the Northwest, as there is on the present occasion, for it must be remembered that the vacancy in the portfolio of the Minister of the Interior to-day is caused owing to the fact that legislation is before this House which the responsible minister from the district refused to endorse and which he claims is not satisfactory to the people of that region. Therefore, the circumstances are entirely changed, and, as far as the parallel goes, the Prime Minister's argument will not hold good. The custom in all these matters in the old country is that there shall be a responsible minister at each post. The leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) has referred to a case in point, where, in 1871, objection was simply taken in the House of Commons to the fact that Mr. Childers, First Lord of the Admiralty, was absent during illness, and within one month thereafter Mr. Childers resigned. This is even more important than the case of the absence of a minister through illness. We have before us an important measure which is going to affect that Northwest country for weal or woe. The minister refuses to sanction that measure and retires from the cabinet, but owing to certain pressure, I do not know what the pressure or arrangement may have been, time may solve it, but owing to some negotiations—and they are good at carrying on negotiations and bringing about mediations in the cabinet—the ex-Minister of the Interior has agreed to vote for the government's emasculated measure, as he terms it, although on every solitary point in the Bill he differs essentially from the First Minister and the cabinet. The circumstances are such that I maintain they warrant the action of the government in filling the post at the very first opportunity. The First Minister has stated that this Bill cannot wait, that it must become law by the 1st of July. It is not very long from now until the 1st of July, and if the First Minister is anxious that the measure shall get through by the 1st of July it might be advisable for him to seriously consider whether or not its passage would not be facilitated by the appointment of a new Minister of the Interior, who might go before his constituents, seek re-election and test the feeling as to the reception which the Bill will likely meet when it has been passed by this House. The Prime Minister would likely make time if he adopted such a course rather than trusting to the Bill being passed with-