

if some persons in the country are inclined to think that there must have been a reason for such treatment of the duly accredited representatives of the Northwest in connection with this important matter. The Minister of Finance is the gentleman who on the part of the government would be held responsible for the financial terms which however lightly they may be spoken of in this House and however slightly they may be discussed by members who may not feel competent to discuss such an involved and intricate question, are of immense importance to this country in view of the fact that some millions of dollars a year are to be paid out to each of these provinces. Yet, it cannot be denied that the one minister in the government who should have been consulted on the financial terms was not even in the city of Ottawa when the Bill was brought down, for it was brought down two days I think before the date on which it was known the Minister of Finance would arrive here. The Minister of Justice was the member of the government who above all others was most intimately acquainted with all the questions involved in this measure, and yet it cannot be denied, for he himself has admitted it, that although he discussed different other questions with the government, although he had given long and anxious consideration to the education question, this, the most important of all the questions had never been mentioned between him and his leader up to the time the Bill was laid before the House; and the Bill was hurriedly brought down within a couple of days before the hon. gentleman's expected return. Surely we cannot be surprised if some people should think that this is a suspicious circumstance. We find, from the statements made to the House, that this important matter was deferred to a subcommittee of the government. I have not a word to say against the members of that sub-committee, but I would venture to suggest that perhaps those whom I may describe as the minority must not be surprised if those who happen to be in the majority think it rather strange, that when Mr. Haultain could not be consulted on the education clause, and when the ex-Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance could not be consulted, that a committee composed of the Premier, Mr. Fitzpatrick, the Minister of Justice; Mr. Scott, the Secretary of State, and Sir William Mulock were the four to whom was referred this important question. Surely there is something in that to cause the people of this country to wonder if everything is as simple and plain as has been represented by hon. gentlemen opposite. We find on the return of the Minister of the Interior, that he promptly resigns and having resigned he was heralded through the country as a man who had made sacrifices on the ground of principle. Time went on,

and to-day we have had the Minister of the Interior before the Canadian House of Commons. I stand in the judgment of all those who heard him this evening, if a more pitiable attempt to explain what could not be explained was ever presented to any intelligent body. I am sorry the hon. gentleman is not here to-night. I was at a loss while he was speaking to know, whether one should pity him or pity his ex-colleagues the more. Just think of the position he was in. The Minister of Finance says the only difference between the parties is that one half hour of religious education; the Minister of Justice says he did not intend to go one inch beyond the present conditions, but the clauses are drawn in such a tangled net that a man of the intelligence of the Minister of the Interior did not know what they meant, and he believed they were something so terrible that he had to resign from the government. There is an end to everything in this world, and you would have thought that about that time there was an end to the want of confidence the ministers exhibited towards one another. You would think that gentlemen of the intelligence of the Minister of Justice, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance when they met together and found they were in absolute accord as to what they wanted; you would have thought it would not have been very difficult for them to have said: There is a slight misunderstanding, we will make it clear in a few words; and then and there the Minister of the Interior would have been contented with the clauses and would not have resigned. Evidently there was no such discussion, or the discussion that was held was not what we have been told. Evidently we have not been told all the truth, or else there was more all round stupidity displayed than ever before was displayed in this or any other country by three cabinet ministers.

Then, when the Minister of the Interior had resigned, and the country had sounded his praises from one end to the other, we had this incident. The newspapers sometimes foresee what is to happen, and among them the Montreal 'Witness' of to-day, a paper published before the explanation of this afternoon, writes:

Hon. Clifford Sifton.

It is said he will return to Cabinet and accept the Autonomy Bill as modified.

The Hon. Clifford Sifton, who recently resigned as Minister of the Interior on account of dissatisfaction with the educational clauses in the Autonomy Bills, will, it is said, return to the federal cabinet within the next ten days, and continue in control of the Interior Department.

Mr. Sifton, according to a private despatch received in the city from Ottawa to-day, will make a strong speech in parliament early next week, announcing his acceptance of the educa-