

FIRST READINGS.

Bill (No. 127) for the relief of James Arthur Prior.—Mr. Calvert.

Bill (No. 126) for the relief of Edward Albert Murphy.—Mr. Grant.

INQUIRY FOR RETURNS.

Hon. GEO. E. FOSTER (North Toronto). Before the Orders of the Day are called, I would like to call the attention of the First Minister again to the information asked for on February 21 by the member for Carleton, Ontario (Mr. R. L. Borden), and not yet brought down, to which attention has been called on more than one occasion. Amongst other important things which we can scarcely do without in debating this question, he asked for the centres of population and the tendency of immigration since 1901, for the lands bonded for homestead purposes, the lands granted to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, and what portion of them yet remains to be selected in the territory comprising these two provinces; the lands remaining invested in the Crown, a very important point if we are to take up the consideration of the financial aspect of this question. He also asked for the practical condition of education in the Territories at present. This would include, of course, the number of schools—public schools, denominational schools, or separate schools so-called. All that is information which the First Minister will see is pertinent to the discussion which is now going on.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I think that a great deal of this information is already before the House; for instance, the homesteads granted have, I think, been brought down. I shall inquire. A return has, I think, been brought down already showing that all the lands have been selected by the Canadian Pacific Railway to which it is entitled. The information about the condition of the schools is information which is not at all hard to get; it will be in the library and elsewhere, but I shall, if it is thought advisable, try to have it collected.

Mr. FOSTER. It would seem to me that some such statement as the Finance Department made with reference to the different financial conditions since confederation ought to be put in the form of a memorandum embracing that information. Such a memorandum would be very useful. It would be authoritative, and that is what we want.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTHWEST.

House resumed adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the second reading of Bill (No. 69) to establish and provide for the government of the province of Alberta, and the amendment of Mr. Borden thereto.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

Hon. CLIFFORD SIFTON (Brandon). Mr. Speaker I have been, upon a considerable number of important occasions, called upon to address the House; and upon a good many of these occasions, as I have risen, I have felt confident that at least a considerable section of the House would regard with approval the remarks I desired to make. But I confess that, upon the present occasion, although my old friends have been kind enough to receive me with some applause as I rose, I do not exactly feel the confidence of former occasions that everything I shall say will meet with their approval.

It surely must be regarded as the irony of political fortune that the introduction of this Bill, a Bill for the creation of the two new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, covering territory the administration of which has been my peculiar charge for the last eight years, and to the development of which I have given whatever of capacity and energy I may have possessed in official life, and have given it freely and I might almost say with an affectionate solicitude for their welfare; I say it must be regarded as the irony of political fortune that the introduction of this Bill should be the occasion also of my retirement from the office I held under the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) who leads the government, and the severance of my official relations with the party with which I have had official relations now for some fourteen years.

It was necessary for me, Mr. Speaker, when giving to the House a statement of the reasons for my resignation—it being the constitutional practice to make such a statement—to say that the educational clauses of this Bill had not been before me prior to its introduction to the House. I was careful to say in that statement, although briefly, that the same thing did not apply to the other features of the Bill, or did not apply to its principles, because I had had an opportunity to give my advice to my colleagues upon the other portions of the Bill. Nevertheless some, as I think, rather ill-natured, comments were addressed to the Prime Minister in criticism of his alleged preparation of this Bill, or allowing it to be prepared, without consultation with or advice from the minister who must, under the circumstances, be supposed to have been in the best position to give him advice. These criticisms of which I speak are wholly without justification in the facts of the case. The belief that the Northwest Territories were to be given provincial autonomy is one that, in all the discussions which have taken place has, been forming itself not only in the minds of the members of the government, but in the minds of members of the House during the last few years. There may have been discussions in this House as to the particular time. But the subject has been present to our minds.