

leader for the freedom of action which had been given to individual members of the opposition on this question. He seemed indeed very grateful that freedom of action had been granted. In fact, he said, if not in so many words, yet in effect, that had it not been for that freedom of action given by the leader of the opposition to his followers, he doubted whether he would take the position which he is taking upon the Bill. I have nothing to quarrel with in that attitude of the hon. gentleman. But he went on to express his great sympathy for members on the government side who, he seemed to think, were bound to stand by the government—bound in what way I do not know—in its proposed legislation in regard to the Northwest. I must say to the hon. gentleman that we cannot accept his sympathy on this side—we do not want it. And I take strong exception to the innuendo in his remarks as to the attitude of government members in supporting this Bill. I cannot understand him. Surely the hon. gentleman will not say that the same arguments for toleration, for respect for the rights of a minority, which appeal to him may not also appeal to individual members on the government side. The hon. gentleman said—and I think it is not beside the question for me to refer to his words and to clear up these points before entering upon the consideration of the main part of the issue—that his leader—

—has told them that they shall one and all consult their constituents and their conscience and shall then vote as they see fit upon this Bill.

I want to tell the hon. gentleman that no instructions, no advice, different from that has emanated from the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) who leads the government to his followers.

Mr. ZIMMERMAN. We do not need it.

Mr. GRANT. No, as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Zimmerman) says, we do not need it.

Mr. SPROULE. Was the hon. member for North Ontario (Mr. Grant) in the House when the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) said that if this Bill was not carried this government must resign? That was the statement; and, of course, that declared the measure a government measure, and compelled the government's following to stand by them.

Mr. GRANT. I agree with the Finance Minister to this extent—that the resignation of this government and the advent to power of my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) and his friends would be a sad calamity for the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. SPROULE. That is not the question at all. I understood the hon. member (Mr. Grant) to say that nothing had been given out on the government side that, in relation to this Bill, the government supporters were to do otherwise than consult

their consciences and their constituents, which was what was done on this side.

Mr. GRANT. I wish to repeat that, so far as I am aware—and I think I know pretty well what goes on—there has been no indication, either from the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) who leads the government or any member of the cabinet, to any private member supporting the government, as to the attitude he should take upon this Bill. Now, the hon. member for St. Antoine went on to say:

—and, unless I am greatly mistaken, there are many members on the other side of the House who would have been glad enough if their leader had made the same declaration. I think there are quite a few in that solidly united party of which we heard this afternoon, and of which we have heard on many previous occasions, who would be glad enough if they might be allowed to vote as their own conscience dictated, and as their constituents demanded.—

Note the words—

—at this time.

I want to tell my hon. friend that, at least so far as I am concerned, and so far as my knowledge extends to other members on this side, we are voting and acting upon this measure as our consciences dictate. And I regret that the hon. member for St. Antoine, who, I must say again, made a judicious, a moderate and a well-argued speech, saw fit to mar that speech by the reference that he has made to the attitude taken by government supporters in regard to this question. And again I ask if he supposes that the same principle of toleration and respect for the rights of the minority that appeal to himself do not appeal also to the members supporting the government?

But on the same line, I read in the Ottawa 'Citizen,' the main organ of his party in Eastern Ontario, as late as last Saturday, the following paragraph:—

There are several Conservative members voting for the Autonomy Bills not because they personally approve of the principle, but because they believe it to be their duty to represent the feeling of a majority of their constituents. On the Liberal benches the members do not appear to be afflicted with any concern as to how the majority of their constituents view the matter.

I think that was a very unkind reflection for the chief organ of the Conservative party in Eastern Ontario to make upon gentlemen opposite who support this Bill. Boiled down, what does it mean? It means, if it means anything, that these hon. gentlemen are trying to save their parliamentary hides by this vote. I think that a very poor compliment to pay to these gentlemen. I do not believe that to be the reason actuating such members as the hon. and learned members for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk), Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) and Stormont (Mr. Pringle). I give it as my opin-