

past, I might term him a scrapbook orator to-day. Whenever I have endeavoured to gather up certain pearls of thought which he has distributed in days gone by and to contrast them with the utterances made in the immediate present, the right hon gentleman has been good enough to apply that appellation to myself and I trust that he will not resent my returning it to him on this occasion. The right hon. gentleman has told us that the measure which the government has introduced, and especially the educational clauses contained in section 16 of the Bill, as well as the provisions which have been now substituted for that section, make for unity. Well, Mr. Speaker, they may make for unity in the country if the right hon. gentleman's own words are to be taken at their face value to-day, but certainly they have not made for unity in the cabinet nor among the right hon. gentleman's followers. The Prime Minister has been good enough a few days ago to charge me with having treated this question in this House lightly. I desire, in terms as strong as the usage of this parliament will permit, to repudiate to the utmost that assertion, and to say that if any man in this House has treated that question lightly it has been the right hon. gentleman himself. When I brought this question up two years ago, not he, nor any one of his colleagues in the cabinet dared to rise in his place and say one word about it. They put up the hon. member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) who was then the member for Alberta, to say on behalf of the government that they were not going into any 'blind pool,' and when the right hon. gentleman tendered to this country and to the members of the Northwest the blindest kind of pool in the letter which he wrote in the heat of a general election, then hon. gentlemen on the other side were all too eager to accept it without one moment's question. That was the first occasion when he treated this question lightly. The next was when in this House he asserted, crying 'hear, hear' to the words of my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. W. J. Roche) who interpreted the remarks of the Prime Minister as meaning that provincial autonomy could not be granted to the Territories of the Northwest for many years to come. And, in the next place, Mr. Speaker, he treated this question lightly when he brought this Bill down to parliament, telling parliament as plainly as if he had said so in express terms that this measure embodied the collective wisdom of the cabinet, when afterwards it transpired although the Bill had not even been submitted to the ex-Minister of the Interior or to the Minister of Finance, the most important members of the government. And, in the next place, Sir, my right hon. friend treated this question lightly when more than once I asked him across the floor of this House why it was that he, the leader of the House ventured

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

to mislead it with regard to the attitude of two of his ministers. I asked him that question not once or twice, but three times, and the only answer I ever received from the right hon. gentleman was evasion and badinage. It does not lie in his mouth to charge me with having treated this question lightly in view of the fact that he has dealt with it after the fashion I have described. Further than that, the right hon. gentleman approaches the consideration of this question now without a minister in the Department of the Interior, although in the right hon. gentleman's correspondence the absence of the Minister of the Interior on former occasions has been put forward as a ground for delay. So much for that. I will leave the right hon. gentleman himself to judge whether under these circumstances he or I can most justly be charged with having treated this question lightly and not in the serious way in which it should be treated.

I do not agree, Sir, with some remarks which the right hon. gentleman made in his speech on the 21st of February. He then said :

A great deal has been done ; in fact more has been done than we have to do to-day. We have to take the last step, but it is easy and comparatively unimportant in view of and in comparison with what has already been accomplished.

I do not know whether my right hon. friend is quite of the same opinion to-day with regard to the easy nature of the step, but I venture to say in all seriousness that the step which we are taking is the most important and momentous step that has ever been taken by this parliament in regard to our northwestern country. We are doing to-day what this parliament cannot undo in the future, because the constitution which we now propose to give to the territories of the Northwest can only be altered by the imperial parliament.

I agree absolutely with the principle of this Bill so far as it is designed to give a provincial status to these territories. As leader of the Conservative party, I laid down that principle when in the northwest more than two years ago. I have stood for that principle in this House in the sessions of 1903 and 1904, and that principle I stand for to-day.

The mode in which the right hon. gentleman has brought down this measure has led to the expression of strong differences of opinion throughout this country. The educational clauses have been discussed almost exclusively in all parts of Canada. For the moment they overshadow other questions : they involve differences of race. When I addressed the House on the first reading of the Bill I said I did not desire to make this a political question. Perhaps the expression was not very happily chosen, because from whatever aspect considered, it must in the highest sense of