

Mr. FITZPATRICK. I shall be glad to convey the suggestion of my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) to the hon. member for Brandon.

Mr. INGRAM. This is a very important matter, and a very simple one, if we are to believe the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Fisher), who told us that the explanation was so easy and plain that the way-faring man though a fool might understand it. I am sorry that the Minister of Agriculture is not in his place to-day, so that we could get that very simple explanation. And yet we have the speech of the ex-Minister of the Interior circulated broadcast among the clergymen of this country who do not believe in this class of legislation, telling them that there is nothing in this Bill except provision for half an hour's religious teaching in the schools. I say there is something more than that in this Bill, or the Minister of Justice and the government would have given the explanation long before this. It is quite evident that the members from the west have received an explanation of this legislation, while this side of the House and the country generally are being treated in the most contemptible manner in respect to section 16 and the amended section, as well as section 2. I think it is trifling with the House to have this matter delayed from day to day. A number of the members supporting the government are circulating the opinion that there is nothing in this Bill of any importance with respect to a change in educational and religious matters. They are trying to allay public feeling, and in order to do this, supporters of the government are going back to their constituents and telling them that there is nothing in the Bill. I say there is something in this Bill and a great deal more than the Minister of Finance has stated. But because of the divisions among the factions that comprise this government and its supporters, the plan of the government has not been decided upon and that is why we have this delay.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Would the hon. gentleman give us his views of section 16?

Mr. INGRAM. I have been long enough in this House to know that I am not quite competent to give a legal opinion with respect to what the British North America Act gives the Northwest Territories. But the hon. member for Centre York (Mr. Campbell) undertook the other evening to give his explanation. Was not that rather a piece of presumption on his part? I could understand a layman saying something about the practical part of the question; but so far as the interpretation of the constitution is concerned, I think he would be more prudent to leave it to the Minister of Justice and the leader of the opposition, and any lawyers of that class.

Mr. FOSTER

Mr. CAMPBELL. Then you have no opinion of your own at all?

Mr. INGRAM. I would not venture to declare to my constituents that the Bill means only half an hour of religious teaching in the schools.

Mr. CAMPBELL. What does it mean?

Mr. INGRAM. I am content to wait until I hear the government's statement and final opinion; and when the people do know what it actually means, my hon. friends opposite will not go around and whisper into their ears that it only means half an hour of religious teaching in the schools. But if the question is so simple that the hon. member for Centre York (Mr. Campbell) can get up off-hand and state what the constitutional meaning is, how is it that the Minister of Justice, who has been studying this for weeks and months, refuses to give an explanation of what the clause really does mean?

Mr. BLAIN. I endorse entirely the statement made by my hon. friend from East Elgin (Mr. Ingram). I am one of those who believe that the minister should give this House and country a clear explanation of the difference between the two clauses. It is not right to ask the committee to pass clause after clause and reserve the all-important question until the closing day. There may be then an effort on the part of the government to rush it through. We were promised an explanation to-day; and that explanation is required all the more because we have different and conflicting statements from gentlemen supporting the government, and cabinet ministers as well. The Minister of Finance has given us a very pleasant statement as to what this Bill means.

Mr. FIELDING. Which my hon. friend did not accept.

Mr. BLAIN. He had told us that there was simply nothing in the amended clause, or rather nothing in the original clause, and that the amended clause would give the people of the Territories a national school system to which no one can object—a system that is the very best in Canada, not even excepting that which is in force in his own province, the province of Nova Scotia. As these two hon. gentlemen, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice, both well informed on the Bill, differ in their views, and as the government have devoted many weeks to the preparation of the original clause and the drafting of the amended clause, and as the people of this country have been agitated from one end of it to the other regarding the meaning of the amended clause, and furthermore as we have had a resignation from the cabinet on this question, it is but fair to the House and country that we should have an authorit-