

in 1881. By means of this exemption along with other means, the construction of this road was secured. It is too late in the day to interfere with a contract that accomplished its purpose and without which the road would never have been constructed or the country opened up.

Now, like the other hon. members who have preceded me, I propose to say a few words—and I shall not detain the House at great length—on some of the other clauses of the Bill, more especially the clauses dealing with education. But we all realize the vast importance of this Bill on account of the interest of those who now live in that country. We realize its vast importance because of the people who are yet to go into that country. And we realize its importance not only to the people who are there and the people who are to go there, but to the people of the whole Dominion which is so closely involved. Year after year the overflow of population from the older provinces, perhaps more especially from the province of Ontario, is going into these two new provinces which we are now creating. There our sons and daughters and our grandchildren are going to build up their homes. Is it to be wondered at that we regard with the deepest anxiety the character of the constitution to be given to these provinces, the nature of the law under which they are to be governed, and more especially the educational system under which the children in those provinces will receive their training? It is alleged that during the present spring, from the province of Ontario alone, some 8,000 people have gone into the western country, possibly some to the province of Manitoba, but others, and I think the majority, to the two new provinces to which we are about to give a constitution. Hence, I say, we are deeply interested in the character of the legislation we are now enacting. Complaint has been made in some parts of the country and even in this House that we are devoting too much time to the consideration of this Bill, that we are wasting the time of the House in discussing the matter. I have no sympathy whatever with that feeling. I believe we should be perfectly justified in spending two or three months in order to reach a complete understanding of the measure now before us. I think it would be time and money well spent. It costs but a little more to carry on a session of four or five months than to carry on one of three months. The sacrifice, if there is a sacrifice, is on the part of hon. members of this House; the country practically does not sustain the loss if we continue the discussion of this Bill. But, even apart from that, I say, the money consideration should not influence us, the time occupied need not be taken into consideration. We have a duty to perform to examine into every detail of this measure before we permit it to be crystallized into law. Because, I understand that when

Mr. HENDERSON.

once this law is placed upon the statute-book it will become the constitution of these new provinces practically for all time to come. At least, I understand, it will be beyond the power of this parliament to recall it. It certainly will be beyond the power of the provincial legislatures to alter it. Short of an appeal to great Britain, it will be the constitution of that country for all time to come. The government of the day, no doubt, have had this matter under consideration for some considerable time. It has been spoken of from year to year. The propriety of granting provincial rights to these Territories has been frequently brought under view in this chamber. I have no doubt that the government fully realized at the close of last session that there was a duty incumbent upon them and that they would be called upon, without further delay, to give attention to this question. We find that the right hon. First Minister, (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), in September last, soon after the House had been dissolved, realized the importance of this issue, realized that there was a demand from the Northwest for provincial autonomy, realized that the people there were becoming tired of being merely the wards of the Dominion government, and wished to be placed in possession of full rights of provincial self-government in all those matters delegated to them under the British North America Act. I have before me a copy of the letter which the right hon. First Minister wrote to Mr. Haultain in connection with this matter. I am very much afraid that the right hon. Prime Minister was not as fair to the people of the west on that occasion as he ought to have been. I think it was his duty to inform those people, as he was appealing to them on the eve of a general election, that he was about to bring in a measure to grant self-government to one or two new provinces as the case might be. Instead of that, what do we find in this letter. I shall read only a portion, as that is sufficient for my present purposes:

You will have learned prior to the receipt of this letter that parliament has been dissolved. The new House of Commons will contain not four but ten representatives of the Northwest Territories, who, coming fresh from the people, will be entitled to speak with confidence as to the views and requirements of those whom they represent. Should my government be sustained, we will be prepared immediately after the election, to enter upon negotiations for the purpose of arriving at a settlement of the various questions involved in the granting of provincial autonomy, with a view to dealing with the question at the next session of parliament.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what would Mr. Haultain infer from that letter? Would he not understand from its closing remarks that the Prime Minister of Canada contemplated that so soon as the elections were over he would immediately take up the question of