

each minister for the public affairs of the province or district with which he has close political connection, and with which his colleagues may not be so well acquainted.

Well, I would submit to my right hon. friend that, taking his own standard of ministerial responsibility thus expressed in this Order in Council, the Minister of the Interior was in this case the minister above all others who should have been consulted in the first instance about those very provisions which at the present time are causing some discussion in the country, and, if we may believe all we hear, some dissension on the other side of the House; and I would like to know from the right hon. gentleman how it was that after having delayed some two years before taking up the question at all, the minister who, under the constitutional rule laid down by the government itself, was most to be consulted with regard to the terms of the measure, was not consulted at all, although the measure was introduced within three days of his return to Ottawa. My right hon. friend has been a very strict stickler for constitutional usage in some of his dealings with his ministers in days gone by. I will advert to only one case. We remember that the right hon. gentleman felt himself constrained to ask for the portfolio of Public Works at that time held by the Hon. J. I. Tarte, because Mr. Tarte had seen fit, in the words of the Prime Minister, to advocate a policy which had not yet been adopted by the government. Well, if that be a just reason, have not the colleagues of the right hon. gentleman a right to demand his portfolio at the present time, because he has seen fit not only to advocate, but to place before parliament and the country, a measure to which his colleagues have not all agreed. I do not know on what ground the right hon. gentleman can justify himself in this regard, because it seems to me that it is not treating the House of Commons with due respect to bring down a measure of this kind as one which is concurred in by every member of the administration, and afterwards to acquaint the House, as we are now acquainted, with the fact that certain members at least were not consulted.

Have we not the right under the circumstances to inquire respectfully of the First Minister whether there are any other members of his cabinet outside the member for Brandon, lately Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Finance who were not consulted with regard to the terms of this measure. The right hon. gentleman has adverted to the aid which he obtained from members of the Executive Council of the Northwest Territories. May we not also respectfully inquire whether all the provisions of this measure were considered at the conferences which took place between the members of the cabinet and the members

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

of the Executive Council of the Territories. There is some further desirable information, if the right hon. gentleman will not regard my curiosity as fastidious—because that is the term he usually applies when any question is in the least degree awkward—might I ask whether or not any conculsion has been arrived at with regard to the filling of the position made vacant by the resignation of the Minister of the Interior. I would also respectfully inquire of the right hon. gentleman regarding another matter which I mentioned the other day, namely, whether or not changes in the proposed Bills creating the new provinces are under consideration by the government? We of course, do not seek to concern ourselves with any differences which may have occurred in the ranks of the hon. gentlemen opposite, but the shape in which these measures shall eventually come before parliament is a matter in which we are legitimately concerned and as to which we have a reasonable right to inquire. It is said over and over again in the organs supposed to have the confidence of the government—for example in the very last issue of that newspaper which is supposed to be the organ of the Minister of Agriculture; it is stated not only that these matters are being discussed within the cabinet and in the ranks of the hon. gentleman opposite, but that certain conclusions have already been arrived at and will be announced in due course. I suggested to my hon. friend only the other day that as soon as those changes—if any are contemplated—be agreed upon, they should be announced to the House in order that we may have them under consideration before the time arrives for discussing them in parliament. I venture to bring this matter before the government to-day. The right hon. gentleman told us some ten years ago, when matters of this kind were discussed in parliament and the country, that he was not in the battle 'No,' he said: 'The battle is there; there is the seat of contest; there is the raging conflict.' I do not want to make any special application of those words to-day; but I do think that as soon as the differences are amicably adjusted, we should have a statement from the Prime Minister as to the form this measure will eventually take when it comes before parliament.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I am sorry to say that I have very little to tell my hon. friend of which he is not already aware. He is too old a parliamentarian not to know the answer I must give him. My hon. friend knows well, none better, that the deliberations of cabinets are secret, that all the members of a cabinet are sworn to secrecy, and that solidarity exists among them until one of them chooses to express his dissent because he finds he cannot support any longer the policy of the government. When such a thing occurs, it becomes the duty of the government to inform parliament of the