

afford a fair test. I thank the House very much for the kind attention with which they have heard me.

Mr. J. HERRON (Alberta). I shall occupy only a few minutes of your time, Mr. Speaker, in stating, as briefly as possible my views on the phase of the provincial autonomy question that is now before us. I was much surprised to hear the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) state this afternoon that he believed that the clauses of his Bill affecting education were the only clauses not satisfactory to the people of the Northwest Territories. If the Prime Minister believes that he expresses the opinions of the people of the Northwest when he says that, except for the educational clauses, they are entirely in accord with the Bill, I can only tell him that I believe that he is mistaken. What his sources of information may be, I do not know. But this is one of the reasons, I think, why we should have a Minister of the Interior to represent that country and express at the council board the wishes of its people. Dealing with the question which involves such important questions, such grave financial responsibilities and controls such vast areas of land, and dealing also with the right of half a million people, it seems perfectly plain that those people should be represented in the government. I do not consider that we are represented at this time. And that is one of the objections the people have to the present situation. We in the Northwest will not be satisfied unless we get the handling of our own lands and our own minerals. I for one believe that no compensation could be given by this government that would reconcile the people of that country to being deprived of this control, for this involves far more than dollars and cents to the people. I wish to put myself on record as saying that there are several clauses in the Bill as objectionable to our people as the clauses dealing with education.

Hon. GEORGE E. FOSTER (North Toronto). Mr. Speaker, the discussion of this afternoon, I believe, has not been without its lessons for this House and the country. Any one of an observant turn of mind sitting in the gallery or even on the floor of this House, would have thought over a great many things, while many deductions from the circumstances would have forced themselves upon his mind. Why is it, for instance, that when an important question of this kind is being discussed we are not afforded even the courtesy of having responsible ministers—still ministers, however long they may continue in their positions—in their seats? The conduct of the policy of the government of which they form, I suppose, a responsible part is being reviewed by His Majesty's loyal opposition. I do not think there is any sufficient answer to that

question. I think these ministers ought to be here. I think they owe it to themselves, to those they represent and to the country at large to be present in their seats. And yet, as this discussion has gone on the observant person would have noticed that at one time there would be but one minister in his seat, at another time two, sometimes even three, but the number always very small. Now, it may be good policy for hon. gentlemen opposite to affect a show of indifference, and, perhaps, at the same time to conceal their true feeling, which is not indifference, but a very genuine discomfiture at the mistakes they have made and the position in which they find themselves. Why is it also that when a subject involving so greatly the interests of the Northwest is under review, we find almost all the members on the other side representing constituencies in the Northwest Territories absenting themselves from their places?

Was it because they have such superior knowledge and such superior parts that they did not think it consistent with their high qualities to listen to animadversions and to statements reflecting on a policy of the government or a Bill which vitally affects themselves? I do not think it was. I think that their modesty would not allow them to come to any such conclusion. Then was it because they were supremely careless and did not care a fig how things went? I hardly think it was that either. Or was it because they were schooled to silence and told to say nothing and get out of the House? Perhaps that would come nearer the right answer than either of the other suppositions I have made. These hon. gentlemen opposite were wont to be voluble enough. In 1896, their tongues were not tied. When they were on this side of the House they had a volume of speech and sound which was admirable, long continued and vehement it seemed to come from inexhaustible sources. Why are those gentlemen so silent now? Why is it they have not a single word to say in their own defence? Why is it that responsible ministers who, I suppose, count for something in the cabinet—some ministers do count for something—why is it that two of them at any rate who counted for something were forestalled deliberately before the Bill was brought down. The others who remained, and who presumably did not count for much, were simply taken in hand by that autocrat, the First Minister. His Bill was rushed in and he practically said to these gentlemen: there it is before you and the country; you can support it or not as you please. I make bold to say, Mr. Speaker, that never before has any parliament witnessed such an exhibition. Like whipped children fearing the lash, yet afraid to confess their faults, the members of the government, from the