

measures proposes to create. The subject of transportation is one to which very great attention has been given by this parliament in recent years. The subject of railway transportation is a very important one; but I may point out that in these Territories at the present time, I think it is not going too far to say, the matter of wagon roads is of quite as great an importance as the matter of railway communication. Railways of course, are necessary. But the railway cannot be brought to every man's door, and, to reach the railway, the wagon road is necessary. A computation has been made which goes to establish the fact that the settler or farmer who is fifteen miles from the railway shipping point is under as great a cost in getting his wheat to the shipping point—supposing that that point is Regina, where I live—as he is under for the carriage of that wheat from the shipping point to the head of the Lakes, nearly 800 miles.

Therefore, there can be no question of the importance and magnitude of the questions involved in the Bills. I have, on several occasions before, had the privilege of addressing this House; but on no previous occasion have I felt so greatly the responsibility resting upon me as upon this occasion. And, whether my tenure of office here as the representative of a constituency prove long or short, I do not think that at any future time it will be my duty to address the House upon a subject of such importance as I feel the subject now under discussion to be.

In replying to the admirable speech with which these Bills were introduced by the right hon. First Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. R. L. Borden) devoted a good deal of attention—more attention than I had expected him to give—to certain aspects of the case which had formed the subject matter of discussion up and down the township lines and in the school-houses of the Northwest up to the third of November last, but which did not seem to me to be quite in keeping with the kind of discussion which might be expected from the leader of the opposition speaking upon such an occasion, and dealing with such a measure as this, before a body as this House. The hon. gentleman sought to establish the proposition that the right hon. First Minister and his government had made a right-about-face since last session upon the question whether or not provincial autonomy should be granted to the people of the Northwest Territories. And, in his endeavour to sustain a very weak position, he sought to make use of a remark or rather an ejaculation of the Prime Minister on one occasion about two years ago. It was alleged that the Prime Minister had said 'Hear, hear,' when the hon. member for Marquette (Mr. W. J. Roche) had made some remark to impress the idea that the

government was not favourable to provincial autonomy. I do not know whether my hon. friend—in fact I must take it for granted that my hon. friend was not aware that before the end of that session the First Minister had set himself right on that point, and I will read a passage which may be found in the 'Hansard' of 1903, page 13907:

Mr. ROCHE (Marquette). I stated that I was putting the Prime Minister's sentiments correctly before the House to the effect that for many years to come the Territories need not expect autonomy at the hands of this government, and the Prime Minister said 'hear, hear.'

The PRIME MINISTER. If I said 'hear, hear' it was not affirmation. On the contrary, it was negation.

Why, it is within the knowledge of everybody in Canada, and should be within the knowledge of every member of this House who was in the last parliament, that on several occasions responsible ministers of the Crown stated their opinion authoritatively that the time had nearly come when full provincial powers must be conferred on the people of the Northwest Territories. The hon. member for Brandon, then Minister of the Interior, as long ago as three years, stated in the House that he had arrived at the conclusion that provincial autonomy must very soon be meted out to the people of the Northwest Territories. During the session of 1903, the Minister of Finance, in the most explicit terms, stated two or three times that the government had arrived at the conclusion that the time was near at hand when full provincial powers must be conferred on these people.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the able address given to the House last evening by the hon. gentleman who represents the district of Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lake) in this House. If it would not be presumptuous on my part to say so, I would congratulate the House, I would congratulate the Northwest, and particularly I would congratulate our hon. friends opposite upon their acquisition of that hon. gentleman, who was elected last November to represent the district of Qu'Appelle. Of course, I do not quite agree with every one of the statements made by that hon. gentleman; but I will say this for him, that he made the class of speech that friends of the Northwest Territories desired to be made before this question of provincial autonomy was determined, before the details and terms were determined; it was the class of speech which the true friend of the Northwest felt it proper to make, and just the class of speech I have made myself the first session I came into this parliament. But I cannot agree with quite all the things which my hon. friend stated as facts. I understood the hon. gentleman to say that Mr. Haultain's draft Bill, prepared, I think, in December, 1901, or January, 1902, was unanimously endorsed by the assembly of the Northwest Terri-