

enter into a conference with the members of the executive with a view to granting provincial government to the people of the Northwest Territories, the right hon. gentleman replied at that time that he could not accede to their request; for what reason? Because of the absence of the Minister of the Interior through illness. He could not take up this great question in the absence of the member of the government who was particularly charged with looking after the welfare of western interests, with the gentleman who, from his long residence in that western country and from his long official connection was better able to give him official advice than any other colleague in his cabinet. I must admit that the contention of the right hon. gentleman at that time was a very valid one and that in the absence of this gentleman it was not reasonable to take up the question of self government for the Territories. According to my judgment this was in accordance with constitutional procedure and was a deferring to the Minister of the Interior that was only that gentleman's due. The granting of autonomy to the people of the Northwest Territories is a most important question; it marks another epoch in the history of the confederation of Canada and it is a question requiring the best advice of the most responsible advisers. Realizing this, as undoubtedly the Prime Minister did, he would not enter into the initial stages even, he would not take up the question of holding a conference with the territorial executive in the absence of his responsible Minister of the Interior. If, however, it was so very necessary to have that gentleman present in the conducting of negotiations, how much more was it necessary to have him here when that Bill was being drafted for submission to this House. And yet, we find the right hon. gentleman having a Bill prepared or preparing it himself, in company with his colleagues, without that gentleman's presence, without his consent, without his knowledge even, and launching it on this parliament without ever having submitted it to him for his approval or disapproval. No explanation has yet been vouchsafed to this House by the Prime Minister why he followed such a course. He has not touched upon that phase of the speech of the hon. the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) this afternoon. He realizes that there is no explanation that can be forthcoming for his having treated his Minister of the Interior so cavalierly and having so contemptuously treated indirectly the people of the west. There has been no explanation of why he took so different a position from that of two or three years ago when he would not even have a conference in the absence of the Minister of the Interior. This information, I may say, did not come from the right hon. gentleman himself; it remained for the Minister of the Interior, upon his return to the House of

Commons when he saw for the first time this Bill that has been submitted to parliament, when he read the educational clauses, and realized that he could not consistently give his support to the educational clauses to sever his official connection with the government and give an explanation to the members of the House, which conveyed the idea to every member in this House that that hon. gentleman resented, and justly resented, the treatment accorded to him by his chief, the head of the government, in paying so little respect to those views which the premier knew quite well his colleague held. This is especially remarkable in view of the policy that was laid down by the hon. gentleman and his colleagues no longer ago than the session of 1904 in regard to the principle that was to guide the right hon. gentleman and his government in the division of ministerial responsibility. This has been referred to on a previous occasion, but it will stand emphasizing, and I desire to read this Order in Council wherein the hon. gentleman laid it down as his guiding principle as to how the affairs of the country were to be managed. He said:

In the case of members of the cabinet, while all have an equal degree of responsibility in a constitutional sense, yet in the practical working out of responsible government, in a country of such vast extent as Canada, it is found necessary to attach special responsibility to each minister for the public affairs of the province or district with which he has close political connection, and with which his colleagues might not be so well acquainted.

And yet, notwithstanding that declaration of policy within eight months of laying down that principle to guide himself and his colleagues, he, the erstwhile democrat to the hilt, in the most autocratic manner, rides roughshod over the terms of this Order in Council and practically ignores the fact that he has a Minister of the Interior at all. The right hon. gentleman knew quite well the very strong views held by his Minister of the Interior on that separate school question. He was quite well aware of the fact that in the west a few years ago he earned himself the sobriquet of being the special champion of national schools. The right hon. gentleman knew the strong stand his minister had taken against Dominion interference with matters that should be entirely under provincial control and yet, with this knowledge in his possession, he had so little respect for his colleague from the west that he did not even submit the educational clauses to that hon. gentleman. The right hon. gentleman evidently did not do so, to judge by the remarks of the ex-Minister of the Interior himself. Is it at all surprising, therefore, under the circumstances that that gentleman should resent such treatment and should sever his official connection with his colleagues and should step down and out.