

him to appreciate the importance of this question. Letters were addressed to him and to members of his government, over and over again, by the Prime Minister of the Northwest Territories of Canada. To these letters an answer was sometimes deigned and sometimes no answer was given for months. Letters were written by the Prime Minister of the Northwest Territories, to the right hon. gentleman who leads the government (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), on May 19, 1904, and on June 1, 1904. This matter which has been presented to the House this afternoon as a matter of transcendent importance, not only to the Northwest of Canada, but to the people of this country from one end of it to the other, was so little regarded by the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues at that time, that the whole summer passed away without any answer having been vouchsafed to the Prime Minister of the Northwest Territories. It was only in the stress of an election campaign that the right hon. gentleman awoke to the fact that he had not answered those communications. They were written on May 19 and June 1; and it was on September 30, after parliament had been dissolved, and when a campaign was actually in progress, that the right hon. gentleman was good enough to remember that he had not given any answer to the Prime Minister of the Northwest Territories. Then the matter seemed to him to possess a little more importance than he had previously considered. I will not deal with his answer now; there will be a better opportunity later on for dealing with the subjects with which it is concerned. But he did say this

In reference to your letter of the 1st of June, I do not think I need discuss at length the representations which it contains further than to intimate my opinion that circumstances have justified the wisdom of the course adopted by my government in declining to deal finally two years ago with the many important questions involved in the admission of the Northwest Territories into confederation as a province or provinces.

Did not the right hon. gentleman realize, when he wrote that letter, that it was not two years ago, but about 11 months before, that he himself had stood up in this House and voted against the proposal even to consider the question of the admission of the Northwest Territories into the confederation on a provincial basis? He went on:

Rapid development has taken place in the Northwest Territories during the intervening period.

Does he not remember that in the course of the debate to which I have referred, we pointed out that that development was not only going on, but might be expected to continue in the near future at even a greater rate? However, I will not deal with that subject further than to repeat that, in view of what I have brought to the attention of the right hon. gentleman, and apparently

what he himself had forgotten, there is evident in his remarks to-day a marked change from the opinion he expressed in this House on the occasion to which I have referred, when he voted against the proposal that the request, the unanimous request, of the representatives and the government of the Northwest Territories should be taken into immediate consideration.

Now, I do not propose to discuss the provisions of this Bill in detail to-day. Let me say, however, that I regret very much that the government have not seen fit to give to the people of the new provinces that control over the lands of the Northwest Territories which is enjoyed by all the other provinces of Canada. That is a subject which will bear fuller discussion later on, and I do not propose to weary the House with any extended remarks respecting it this afternoon. The only thing which could be called an argument made by the right hon. gentleman against that proposition was this: he said it might interfere with the operation of the policy of the government with respect to immigration. So far as the rest of his argument is concerned, it would have justified the retention by the Imperial government up to the present time of every acre of Crown lands in Canada; and I was somewhat astonished to hear from the right hon. gentleman, the advocate, in the past at least, of responsible government, the defender of the liberties of the people on some occasions, according to his own view at least, I was astonished to hear from him the views he put forth this afternoon as to the rights of the people of the Northwest Territories in respect of those lands. He knows something of the history of this question. We remember that there were statesmen in Great Britain not many years ago who thought that the public lands not only of Canada but of all the dependencies of the empire should be retained under the control of the home government, and administered not so much for the benefit of the dependency in which they were situate as for the benefit of the whole empire at large. But it was soon found, when it was attempted to put that view in practice, that it was absolutely impracticable—that to the people living in and developing any dependency must be entrusted, and might be safely entrusted, the entire control of the public lands within the dependency. The right hon. gentleman spoke of immigration. Does he not know that there is a new Quebec and a new Ontario? Does he not know that a tide of immigration may be expected to flow, and indeed, I suppose it is now flowing into these portions of eastern Canada? Will he venture to say that there has been any obstacle placed against the immigration policy of the government by the governments which administer those provinces? Is that the ground the right hon. gentleman takes? Does he speak from experience, or does he