

his duty and living up to his responsibilities, and gauging the possibilities of the passing hour, if he does not demand that he shall have an opportunity of testing the feelings of the people of London. The portfolio of the Interior is vacant. To-night in this city, there are two or three hundred men from all parts of the Dominion, and especially from the great Northwest, who are down here to do business with the Minister of the Interior, and very important business at that. Can they do it? No, it is absolutely impossible. Even this House has not been able to do anything in connection with the Interior Department for the last three, or four, or five weeks. The right hon. gentleman says he is trying to administer the department. He may be trying to do it, but he will not think I am saying anything out of the way when I say that he is not doing it, and it is practically impossible for him to do it. It is a very large department, with great ramifications. The right hon. gentleman has all he can do without trying to master the details of that department. It is impossible for him to do it; he cannot undertake it and he cannot overtake it. Why should not my right hon. friend appoint his Minister of the Interior and let him go to his constituency and come back here as soon as possible in order that the business of this country may go on? It will not take long, and it will serve another very useful purpose, the purpose, namely, of testing the feeling of the Northwest itself upon the measure which my right hon. friend has brought down. Will he do it?

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

Mr. FOSTER. I do not think he will; but I think he ought to do it in the interest of good government and also in the interest of a full and free expression, in the only way in which it can be given, of the people of the Northwest in regard to the measure which he has brought down.

My right hon. friend accused the leader of the opposition of treating this subject lightly. Well, I must say that I bent forward quickly in my seat when I heard that expression, to make sure that it was the expression actually used. If the treatment of my hon. friend the leader of the opposition was light treatment, what does the right hon. gentleman think of his own treatment? If the earnest, honest, straightforward way which my hon. friend beside me took to put his question and to ask for explanations was light treatment, what was the tone adopted and the arguments used by the right hon. gentleman himself? Surely my right hon. friend must have been laughing inside of himself when he made that statement. Does not my right hon. friend see this? He took his own method of getting his information; he took his own time to consult the members of his government—those whom he chose to consult; he took his own leisure

to frame a measure that should be adequate; and so sure was he that it was adequate that he could not wait until the second reading to make his argument, but made it on the introduction of the Bill. However, he had taken his ground, and was determined to stand to it—that was the position of my hon. friend when he introduced this Bill three weeks ago. Now he says that even his government is not above making changes if they are necessary, studying the people and the expression of their feelings, and trying to meet them if they possibly can. Should not that have been done before? The right hon. gentleman spoke of the gravity of the question. It is a grave question. I do not think we are going to discuss this question, whenever it does come before us, in any other than an open, honest and straightforward manner, on its merits. The merits of separate schools are not involved in this Bill. It is a constitutional question, pure and simple, as it seems to me. If we differ upon it, we will differ as gentlemen differ, not reproaching each other for differences of creed or race.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. FOSTER. Hon. gentlemen do not wish to do that. They are opposed to such a course as that. Very well; they can have their way. If they wish the other way, they can have it; but if they do wish it, upon themselves will be the responsibility, that is all; and there is this further to be said, that although no man knew better than my right hon. friend the danger of explosion, the closeness and nearness with which opinions on creed and race are held, and the danger that whenever you touch them you will have harsh expressions, which will grate upon opposing ears—although no man knew better than my right hon. friend, for he has been through these from confederation up, yet, when it was not called for, when he himself disowned it in the first part of his speech, he forgot himself in the latter part and raised the question pure and simple of public schools as opposed to separate schools. Now, if in the heat of debate some harsh expression is used, you will probably find the right hon. gentleman and some of his followers saying: Oh, you are raising the sectarian discussion. The sectarian discussion has been raised by my right hon. friend. He has challenged the public school system of this country and of this continent. He did it gratuitously; it was absolutely unnecessary; although in the first part of his speech he declared that he was not going to do it. Therefore if there is any sinner, it is my right hon. friend; and if there be further sinners, so far as I am concerned, they will be gentlemen on the other side of the House, and not myself at least, nor, I believe, gentlemen on this side of the House. Autonomy is a question which was bound to come up. No human