

know of any modern precedent for conduct of that kind with regard to a measure of any importance, and I think it my duty to once more inquire of the right hon. gentleman what was the overmastering reason which led him under these circumstances to introduce that Bill to this parliament without giving to the people of this country, and especially to this House of Commons, the information that two members of the cabinet, members who above all others, it seems to me, should have been consulted with regard to the provisions of this measure, had not even had it submitted to them, were not even consulted with regard to it, had not even seen it or read it. There must be some explanation for so extraordinary an act. The right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) has not vouchsafed any. I do not want to make explanations for him, I do not want to suggest any explanations. Explanations are being suggested throughout the country, and I would think that it is not only due to this House and to the country, but due to the right hon. gentleman himself that he should, without any further delay, without any further attempt to avoid the issue, inform the House as to the real circumstances under which he took this step in defiance of all unconstitutional usage.

There is one more question which I would again like to ask the right hon. gentleman, and I think that in doing so I am not transgressing my duty. I ask it in the same respectful way and for the purpose of information; it is this: The right hon. gentleman in his speech introducing this Bill referred to the aid in its preparation which the government had received from the members of the Executive Council of the Northwest Territories. What I would like to know is whether or not the educational clauses of this Bill were submitted to, were fully discussed with, and met with the appropriation of members of the Executive Council of the Northwest Territories. In the last place, I would like to ask the right hon. gentleman a question which I have not already asked but which seems to me to be very pertinent in view of his reply of yesterday.. How long does he propose to carry on the affairs of the country without filling the vacant portfolio of the Minister of the Interior? One would suppose that when a measure of the importance of that which has been proposed to parliament, a measure especially affecting the Northwest Territories of Canada, has been introduced and is about to be discussed in parliament, that we should have the advantage of the experience and knowledge of some gentleman of the Northwest Territories, occupying a position in the administration, or, at all events that we should have the benefit of the advice and experience and knowledge of some gentleman filling the

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portfolio of the Department of the Interior, appointed to that portfolio for the very reason that he is well qualified to fill it. These three questions I venture to again bring to the attention of my right hon. friend, and I trust that he will be pleased to give to the House, at my request, that full and sufficient information on the subject to which I think the House is entitled.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) has to-day asked one question which he has not previously put and as to which I am quite ready to give all the information I have at present. My hon. friend desires to know how long the vacancy in the portfolio of the Minister of the Interior will be left unfilled. I have only to submit to my hon. friend and to the House that there has been no undue delay in filling it. The vacancy occurred only ten days ago, and I do not think it could be expected that in so short a time as that the government could come to a conclusion as to whom they should call to fill such an important office. I hope before long I shall be able to give to my hon. friend the opportunity to give his assent to the appointment we shall make. I do not know whether he will respond to the invitation, but at all events we shall certainly afford it to him.

With regard to the other two questions I do not think that I am warranted in giving more information to my hon. friend than I have already given.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. That is none.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That is not much; but I would submit that strictly speaking my hon. friend is entitled to none at all. The conferences which took place between the government and the representatives of the Northwest Territorial government were carried on confidentially, and I do not know whether I have any authority to give any information about them to the House; no record has been kept of this information; the conferences have been absolutely confidential.

With regard to the other question, which my hon. friend has now put for the third time, I am sorry to say my mind has not changed. I think, with all due respect to my hon. friend and to the position he occupies, and to this House, that I have given all the information the House was entitled to. I can see plainly that my hon. friend is shaping his course carefully; he is going ahead bit by bit, he is taking no plunge, but every day we can see a little more where we are finally to be led. Yesterday we could not see where he was to place his batteries, but to-day we can see where they are to be placed. He endeavoured to show that there is a difference between the position occupied by two mem-