

bers of the Liberal party and by the Liberal party itself to-day and the position occupied by that party in 1896. My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) did my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Hon. W. S. Fielding) the honour of quoting him. I am not at all jealous of that honour which he has paid to my hon. friend the Minister of Finance. I compliment the minister upon it; but he might have quoted some of my speeches on the same question. I took some part in that discussion. I intend to take some part in the present discussion. My hon. friend is re-echoing the attempts that have been made in the press to show that there has been a great change from the position taken by the Liberal party in 1896 in the position taken by them in 1905. Now we shall have an opportunity by and by of discussing that question; when we come to the second reading of the Bill I will endeavour to discuss the question with my hon. friend, and we shall discuss it on both sides of the House. I do not admit that there has been any departure at all in the conduct of the Liberal party between 1896 and 1905; but I am sorry to say that hon. gentlemen on the opposite side are always in the wrong. They never can interpret the constitution as it is. In 1896, the position which we took and maintained before the country was that it was not right for the federal parliament to try to impose on the province of Manitoba a system of schools which the province of Manitoba had rejected, acting within the plenary exercise of its powers. If there had been a system of schools in the province of Manitoba in 1870, when it was admitted to confederation, then, Sir, the minority would have been entitled to those schools by the judgment of the courts; but the courts decided that there had been no such system of schools, and therefore the powers of the province of Manitoba were not in any way curtailed. There is a difference, therefore, in the position of Manitoba in 1870, as exposed in 1896, and the position which we are confronted with at the present time. But I will not discuss this question with my hon. friend to-day—I do not think the time is opportune.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I did not discuss it.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. In my estimation my hon. friend came very near discussing it. He was very guarded, but introduced it in a gentle way, just to create the impression that there was a great difference between the position taken by the Liberal party in 1896 and its position in 1905. My hon. friend understands his business too well to have introduced it so bluntly as to state it in that way, but he led to a conclusion which was inevitable. I do not think the present is the time to discuss that question, but I assure my hon. friend that we

shall take the opportunity of doing so at the proper time and on the proper occasion.

Hon. GEO. E. FOSTER (North Toronto). Mr. Speaker, it was a candid admission of my right hon. friend when he confessed that he had not given much information to the hon. leader of the opposition in response to his question of yesterday and of to-day. It was a charming bit of persiflage that the right hon. gentleman made an exhibition of in those few words—airy, light, well-chosen, skimming all around, but avoiding carefully any expression which would go to shed light upon the grave and serious questions which my hon. friend beside me had raised. Now, I do not intend to be led away by this little diversion into a discussion of matters which are not at present before the House. I want to reiterate, in the first place, the position taken by the hon. leader of the opposition. He quoted from statements that had been made by the Minister of Finance, and could have quoted from statements which had been made by the late Minister of the Interior, to show to the right hon. the premier that he knew thoroughly well, when these hon. gentlemen were in his cabinet, and when just lately he introduced his Bill for discussion in his cabinet, that these hon. gentlemen had well-known and pronounced views with reference to the question of education as it would develop in these new provinces. That is the only purpose my hon. friend had in view. The quotations which he made drove that fact fairly well home, so that the right hon. gentleman could not say that he did not know, in the absence of these two gentlemen, that their opinions had been firmly formed and plainly expressed. The startling thing about it was this—and it was not explained away by all the charming discursiveness of my hon. friend yesterday. The question is: what is the constitutional practice when a Bill, having been discussed in the cabinet and agreed to or supposed to be agreed to there, is launched upon the House as the utterance of the government as a whole? That is the question, and the startling thing about it is that the premier introduced a Bill for discussion in his cabinet, knowing the views of these two gentlemen in their absence, and with a haste that has not yet been explained. Engaged as it were, in a race for a goal with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of the Interior, he beat them by about two days and twelve hours—he got in ahead, and he launched his Bill. Now, the country and this House had no warrant for believing anything else than that that Bill in its entirety had been assented to and had the cordial agreement of every member of the cabinet. That is the point the country heeds, and that is the point my hon. friend the leader of the opposition makes. What has happened in this case is, I believe, unprecedented in the history of this parliament, and it is a