

lightly. He has treated also very lightly the circumstance that he also withheld the terms of that clause from the knowledge of his Minister of Finance, who certainly of all ministers of the Crown, should have been acquainted with the provisions of the measure. I might almost venture to say that the conduct of the Prime Minister, in bringing that Bill down while withholding from parliament the knowledge that those gentlemen had not approved of it, amounted to an insult to this parliament; I think I might even go further, and say that the right hon. gentleman, in taking that course, demeaned himself; and not one word of explanation with regard to that very peculiar circumstance has fallen from the right hon. gentleman's lips from that day to this. Instead of that, we have had mere flippant replies or absolute silence when any explanation has been courteously demanded across the floor of this House. Moreover, we have had rumours, I do not know with what truth, but it is right that they should be stated and some answer made—we have had rumours from the press of the province of Quebec in close touch with this administration, and even direct statements, that the cause assigned to this parliament for the resignation of the Minister of the Interior was not the true cause. Further than that, a certain journal published in the province of Quebec with which a very devoted champion and warm and intimate personal friend of the Prime Minister is connected, has seen fit to make that statement in the form of a cartoon, which most of us have seen, but to which I will not make any further reference by way of description.

Mr. LEMIEUX. What paper?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. 'Le Nationaliste.'

Mr. LEMIEUX. I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. It is not a paper friendly to the government. It is opposed to the government every Sunday.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I accept at once the superior knowledge of my hon. friend the Solicitor General. I do not profess to be an expert in regard to the opinions of that paper; but my hon. friend from Labelle (Mr. Bourassa), who is a warm champion of the government with regard to this measure with which the resignation of the late Minister of the Interior is closely associated, has a very close connection with that paper, if I am rightly informed.

Mr. LEMIEUX. If the hon. member for Labelle were here, I am sure he would dissent from my hon. friend's statement. The hon. member for Labelle has repeatedly declared before this House and before the public that he had nothing to do with the 'Le Nationaliste.'

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I accept the statement of my hon. friend as I would accept

the statement of the hon. member if he were here; but I have been informed, perhaps incorrectly, that the hon. member for Labelle has been one of the regular contributors to that journal, and I myself have seen contributions in that journal which purported to be signed by that hon. gentleman. I do not think my hon. friend will deny that.

Mr. LEMIEUX. I can say to my hon. friend that when the paper was started about two years ago the hon. member for Labelle wrote two or three articles which he signed 'Henri Bourassa'; but since then he has declared over and over again that he has nothing to do with the paper.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I accept whatever my hon. friend states about it without the slightest reserve, either parliamentary or otherwise, and I will leave that for the gentlemen from the province of Quebec to settle. I do not pretend to know anything about it. There is another little interesting rumour which has come to us from time to time, and I observe that in former days my right hon. friend was very much interested in these rumours and used always to bring them to the attention of parliament in order that they might be contradicted. I have looked up his record in that regard and find that I have good precedent for what I am about to mention. There is a very strong rumour, said to have emanated from a certain member of the administration, who lately received a pretty severe little stab in this House from the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton), that the ex-minister was not so absolutely ignorant of the terms of this measure, in the first instance, as had been suggested in this House. I do not know about that, but my right hon. friend can perhaps give us information and set at rest at once that disquieting rumour.

But what is the position to-day, so far as the Department of the Interior is concerned? We have a statute which says that there shall be a Department of the Interior and there shall be a Minister of the Interior. We start with that in the first instance. That statute goes on to say: 'The Minister of the Interior shall have the control and management of the affairs of the Northwest Territories.' Those are the exact words of the statute, and that statute has been in force during every one of the thirty-one days which have elapsed since the ex-Minister of the Interior has resigned. What was my right hon. friend's view with regard to this constitutional question not long ago? I have already brought it to the attention of the House, but it is not out of place that I shall repeat his own words again:

In the practical working out of responsible government in a country of such vast extent as Canada, it is found necessary to attach a special responsibility to each minister for the public affairs of the province, or district with which he has close political connection, and