

by what he said I shall read his further remarks :

That is the position that we have before us to-day. I am not here to advocate separate schools as an abstract proposition, but we have introduced into this Bill the two propositions that the minority shall have the power to establish their own schools, and that they shall have right to share in the public money. It is the law to-day.

And further on the right hon. gentleman says in the same speech that he had decided on the incorporation of this clause as it then stood with the explanation and the argument in support of it which he then gave the House. If I understand the word 'decision' it means that first there were conferences, consultations, deliberations and a great deal of searching of hearts with respect to matters then under consideration, and that the final decision which was reached was then crystallized into that Bill and was then explained and argued for by the introductory speech. Then a change came over the spirit of the dream of the right hon. gentleman. The Minister of the Interior resigned, and there came one of those eloquent silences which have prevailed latterly over the government benches when awkward questions from this side of the House have been asked. There have been silences when questions as to the absence of ministers have been asked, and questions with regard to the intention to change that which the government had said was decided upon, and there have been great silences to-night and this afternoon with regard to the cogent questions which have been asked by the leader of the opposition. The right hon. gentleman is face to face with a position which is not an enviable one and one which he will find it difficult to reconcile with what has been said. There has been the deliberation which he admits, there has been the knowledge of the existence of the factional strife, knowledge of the existence of that prejudice to which in his speech he referred; there has been the argument and the positive assertion that the clause has been introduced after mature deliberation; there has been the first reading of the Bill, its printing and circulation, and then there were rumours with regard to the dissensions which exist in the cabinet to-day. The House and the country are in the dark, are labouring to know what the intentions of the government are with regard to this important clause in that Bill. I consider, Sir, that they are entitled to know because if the Prime Minister of this country can stand up in his place and pronounce for a certain state of things as the result of deliberation, and state that that is his decision, and that is the law to-day, and then afterwards state or hint vaguely that changes may take place and will not deny the suggestion that there may be a reference to a judicial tribunal, then I say the people

are entitled to know the reason for this vacillation. The position of the government upon this question is simply incomprehensible. It is simply impossible to ascertain from its members where it stands. The record of 'Hansard' shows that it stands in one place and that it is absolutely, irrevocably or in the words of the hon. member for Wellington, unalterably committed to one line of policy. Then we have the dark hints which have fallen from the lips of the Prime Minister, that there might be changes—and changes with regard to the very clause of this Bill which he states was the subject of mature deliberation. There is a point with regard to the resignation of the member for Brandon, the ex-Minister of the Interior (Hon. Mr. Sifton), to which I would like to refer. The hon. minister on that day made an explanation of his reasons and that explanation is before the House. It contains something to which I would invite the consideration of the House in view of the statements made by the Prime Minister since that time. He says :

Before leaving I discussed with the Prime Minister most of the subjects that necessarily required to be dealt with in the Bill which was to be introduced, and so far as I was able to do so at that time, I communicated my views to him upon the various subjects. I may say that when I went away I did not anticipate that it would be considered necessary to introduce the Bill for creating the new provinces before I returned.

What does that indicate? Is it not reasonable to infer from the very plain utterance of the hon. gentleman that he had conferences with the leader of the government, that the result of these conferences was that clauses of this Bill were submitted for consideration that he was leaving on a prolonged absence and that further consideration, further conferences at any rate, as he understood, were postponed until he should have returned? He further proceeds :

As members of the House are aware, I returned to the capital on Thursday afternoon. I immediately took occasion to read carefully the speech which the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) had delivered in introducing the Bill.

And hence followed the resignation. If I read English aright that meant that the Minister of the Interior felt that he had not been rightly treated by the leader of the government; he felt that he had been promised consideration and attention and that he had a right to be further consulted before that Bill was brought down. And very natural was his chagrin and disappointment when he found on his return that the Bill had been introduced with clauses to which he had objected. Sir, reference has been made by the Prime Minister to the record of the election of 1896, when hon. gentlemen opposite came into power, on the advocacy of a principle the diametrical