

the other side of the House, we are always reproached for having done something wrong. I had scarcely taken my seat when I moved the first reading, when a gentleman (Mr. Sproule) who sits very close to the leader of the opposition rose and spoke thus :

This is an important Bill and I ask that a large number of copies be printed as there are many applications for it. I would suggest that the second reading might be delayed for some period until there has been an opportunity to hear from those who are most interested, the people of the Northwest.

This request seemed to be not unreasonable. I thought it would be advisable that all parties in this country should have an opportunity of reading the Bill and digesting its provisions. So persistent was my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) that he again repeated his request on another occasion, and on the 7th of March he spoke as follows :

The second reading of the Bill to establish autonomy in the Northwest Territories is expected to take place some time soon, and there are many members who desire to be present on that occasion. In referring to the matter I am not in any way intimating a desire to have an early reading of the Bill because the later this comes on the better for our aims and our desires.

In order to facilitate the aims and desires of my hon. friend (Mr. Sproule) who is member of parliament for East Grey and who holds another position in the country also, I thought that by giving him an opportunity of having this Bill read and digested I was conferring upon him a favour and meeting the wishes of the leader of the opposition. It appears to have been a sad mistake on my part; a mistake which I shall be perhaps slow to commit on a future occasion. I shall steel my heart against the blandishments of my hon. friend from East Grey in future, and strive to do my stern duty.

My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) has found another evidence of the hasty preparation of this Bill, in the general scope of the letter of Mr. Haultain. I do not agree with my hon. friend in this respect. It is true that the letter from Mr. Haultain which he asks to be placed on the table of the House, takes exception to almost every provision of the Bill, but, if I am to judge from the expressions of public opinion which are coming from all parts of the country, there is only one feature of the Bill, and that the school clause, which has caused any comment. With regard to the number of provinces to be created; with regard to the land question, with regard to the finance question; indeed with regard to all other proposals of the Bill I have yet to learn that serious exception has been taken. There have indeed been some expressions from here and there, but so far as concerns any general views from the people

of Canada, the manifestations seem to be only against the clause referring to education. The House is aware that every day we have received numerous petitions regarding these Bills. Do they speak of the land question; do they speak of the finance question; do they speak of the number of provinces? No; it is only on the education clause of the Bill as to which we have received any petitions so far.

I know, Sir, that in dealing with this question we are walking upon very tender ground. It shall be my duty some time or other to discuss it, but I do not need to say anything as to the merits of the question at the present time. I take issue with my hon. friend when he says that the Bill bears evidence of hasty preparation. On the contrary it has every evidence of having been discussed and prepared with great care and deliberation, and, if the educational phase were eliminated, I do not think the Bill itself would then receive a word of criticism. My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) says: You have not consulted Mr. So-and-So, and Mr. So-and-So, and in particular you have not consulted Mr. Haultain. On this ground I am prepared to give my hon. friend all the satisfaction, and perhaps more than all the satisfaction he is entitled to. Upon a recent occasion my hon. friend questioned me as to what had taken place in the conferences between us and Mr. Haultain and Mr. Bulyea. I did not think it advisable to give my own version on that subject, and I gave my reasons to the House and it is for the House to decide whether these reasons were good or bad. I stated that in my judgment and to my way of thinking these conferences had been confidential; that there had been no secretary appointed; that there had been no record kept, and that there had been simply an exchange of opinion across the table between the members of the government at Ottawa and the members of the Northwest government.

Under such circumstances, I do not think it would have been right for me to have given my own version of what had taken place at that conference. I am still of that opinion; and, Sir, I can appeal to the judgment of any man in this House that when you have a conference, the proceedings of which are not recorded in writing, it is always a somewhat risky process to endeavour to say exactly what took place. Mr. Haultain thinks differently. I do not know that Mr. Haultain, in the letter which he has addressed to me, and which he has also given to the public, has improved the criticism which he makes of the Bill when he complains that he had not received due consideration. Sir, I would be sorry to think that I or my colleagues had been guilty of any want of courtesy towards Mr. Haultain in regard to the matters which were treated at the conference. But Mr. Haultain has relieved us of any such im-

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.