

But, at the same time, the country, and especially the west, is left without a voice in the council, without a representative of the western interests that are paramount, at a time when they should have somebody in the cabinet to maintain their rights. The Prime Minister has informed this House that he has taken no steps to fill this vacancy, nor is it his intention to take any immediate steps towards that end. In order that I may not do him any injustice, let me quote from 'Hansard' of March 9, the right hon. gentleman's answer to a question of the leader of the opposition :

My hon. friend asks a second question. He wants to know whether any action is to be taken to fill the vacancy in the portfolio of the Interior caused by the retreat of my hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Sifton). He is entitled to a full and categorical answer. No action has been taken, and it is not my intention now to take any action in the way of filling that portfolio.

Now, it is because of that declaration on the part of the Prime Minister that I rise to protest as a western representative, against this procedure. The idea of having these great questions considered without having that portfolio filled is contrary to the best judgment of the people of western Canada. The Prime Minister may say that there has been no undue delay in filling that portfolio, that a longer time has elapsed in filling other vacancies in other cabinets. But this vacancy at this particular time is unique in its character, and there are very special reasons why the portfolio should be filled at the earliest possible moment. In the first place, the resignation has taken place during the holding of a session of parliament, and even before the estimates of this department have received the approval of this House. Important transactions have been carried out under this department since the session of 1904, especially in regard to western Canada, which transactions should be explained to this House by a responsible head of that department. Then, we have the Autonomy Bill, a Bill of vital importance and affecting the whole future of the people of western Canada. The people of that portion of the country demand that they shall have a voice at the council board. The right hon. Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) must know that no acting Minister of the Interior, no colleague of his holding another portfolio, can possibly discharge the duties of the Minister of the Interior to the satisfaction of the people of the west, especially at this juncture ; for they need a man there whom they can hold directly and especially responsible for his official acts. The territory from the great lakes to the Pacific ocean, a territory some 2,000 miles from side to side, is to-day without cabinet representation. Fancy for a moment the great province of Quebec in a similar position. Suppose that, with its 351,000 square miles,

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a large portion of it were still without provincial autonomy ; and suppose that a Bill were submitted to this parliament to confer upon the territory organized all the powers of local self government ; and suppose that there were no representative of those people in the council to maintain their rights ;—would not there be strong expressions of indignation ? And would not those expressions be justified and be supported by every other portion of Canada ? And still, to-day, we have all the territory west of the great lakes, almost a million square miles, inhabited by almost a million souls, of whom half are in the new provinces about to be created, and as yet they are left without anybody to stand up for their rights and see that even-handed justice is meted out to them. Now, there is another great question that demands a representative in the cabinet council to-day and one in which, as a representative of Manitoba, I am especially interested ; I refer to the extension of the boundaries of Manitoba. I will not enter into the merits of that question to-day. I have only to say that we have had many requests made to this government by the people of Manitoba through their legislature, speaking with unanimous voice, for the extension of the boundaries of the province. This is a most opportune time to have that question settled, now that the new territories are having their boundaries fixed. Let any one look at the map, and he will see the proposed new provinces with an area of about 250,000 miles each. British Columbia with 370,000 miles, Ontario with 260,000, and Quebec with 351,000 ; and, in contrast with these, you find little Manitoba cribbed, cabined and confined within an area of 73,000 square miles. The right hon. Prime Minister gave his reason why he would not accede to the request of the Prime Minister of the Northwest Territories to have only one province. He said in effect : Look at this one territory of 500,000 square miles, and then look at Ontario and Quebec with so much less. Well, turn the right hon. gentleman's argument against himself ; look at little Manitoba with an area of 73,000 square miles in contrast with each of these other provinces with an area of 250,000 square miles. Any person with a spirit of fairness must resent such treatment of Manitoba at the hands of the Prime Minister. And what is the reason for this refusal on his part to listen to the unanimous demand of the people of Manitoba ? I am afraid the right hon. gentleman has not been as frank with this House as he might have been. I am not sure that we have had the true reason expressed publicly by the representatives of the government why this treatment is meted out to Manitoba in regard to her boundaries. The Prime Minister says that the government cannot even accede to the request to extend the boundaries of Manitoba northward to Hudson's Bay, but must consult Quebec,