

The one next to that is vacant. There is another vacant on his left and another alongside of the Minister of Inland Revenue. There is also a vacant seat immediately behind the right hon. gentleman. But still there is an unusually large number of ministers in the House to-day, and I have taken, I must admit, an unfortunate occasion to exhibit an object lesson to the country. Usually we have only about three ministers present, and we must therefore, according to the test which the right hon. gentleman applied ten years ago, conclude that the other ten are on the eve of resignation. However that may be, let me say that I do not observe in anything which has been suggested by my right hon. friend any reason why the portfolio of the Interior should not be filled.

He has said nothing on the subject. Has he no material? If he does not appoint my hon. friend from Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) to be Chief Justice of the Northwest Territories, in view of the constitutional argument he gave us the other day, I imagine that that hon. gentleman would make a very good Minister of the Interior, and I am inclined to press his claims. He is a very good friend of mine personally, though we differ somewhat politically; and I stand here to urge the claims of my hon. friend from Edmonton to this position. He is a gentleman of ripe experience and great ability, and, as we all know a gentleman of absolute and perfect independence on all questions. But, if we cannot have my hon. friend from Edmonton, why should we not have the hon. member from West Assiniboia (Mr. Scott). Is not he capable? Is there any apprehension on the part of the right hon. Prime Minister that there will be any difficulty about securing the election of either of these gentlemen? Does he propose to let this matter stand until after the close of the present session, in defiance of all the high constitutional principles which he professed ten years ago? If there is a lack of material among the members for the Northwest Territories, why not appoint some broad minded man like my hon. friend from Ottawa (Mr. Belcourt), who spoke last night, or my hon. friend from Labelle (Mr. Bourassa)? Could not one of these gentlemen be induced to go up and teach these men in the Northwest Territories, whom they described as so narrow and bigoted that they could not be trusted, some of these men whom my hon. friend from Ottawa (Mr. Belcourt) described as regenade Liberals?—why not send one of these broad-minded tolerant gentlemen to these men of the Northwest Territories to teach them what true Christian charity and toleration really are. I do not think there could be any objection to that, though, of course, my hon. friend from Labelle might be himself a candidate for the Chief Justiceship in opposition to my hon. friend from Edmonton, for he has said that he is ready

to discuss the constitution with any man in this country or anywhere else.

Now, just one more observation on this subject. The right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) was rather facetious ten years ago. He told us of those two ministers coming back and likened them to kittens coming back to their cream. Well, we have had a couple of kittens who were a little skittish on this occasion. One, it is true, did not leave the cream. It arched its back and curved its tail, but remained within a reasonable distance of the cream, and is still lapping. The other did leave the cream.

Mr. FOSTER. Shooed away.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. There is a disquieting rumour throughout the country, to which the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) might address himself, that, although the minister in question, like the kitten, has left the cream for the time being there is being prepared for him an exceedingly dainty dish of cream which will be served up in due season. We do not know whether that may be the case or not; but, perhaps it would be well for the right hon. gentleman, remembering the analogy which he gave to the House some time ago, to tell us whether or not there is anything in this rumour.

But, in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, I do think it is due to the House and to the country that the Prime Minister should state what the intention of the government is in regard to the filling of the portfolio. The government, in defiance of all constitutional usages and of constitutional rules laid down by themselves on many occasions intend, apparently, to press this measure through parliament without having in the cabinet any minister who is more especially responsible for the Northwest Territories. We should be informed, in view of the delay in filling this position, what is the cause of that delay and also when the Prime Minister expects to fill this portfolio. Or, if he does not propose to fill it in the immediate future, may I not, respectfully, and with every right, ask him to announce to the House and to the country what the difficulties really are which prevent him, at the present time, from calling to his cabinet some gentleman from the Northwest Territories or elsewhere, who, in the cabinet, will particularly represent these Territories.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). Mr. Speaker, I have no serious fault to find with my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) if he has chosen to have another little joke upon a subject which is evidently congenial to him. I have no fault to find if he has brought to the attention of the House the resignation of my hon. friend the member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) from the portfolio of the Interior and the