

wrong; but at any rate, that is our way of thinking, and we will prepare a clause according to our view which we will submit to you. When the clause was prepared, it was submitted to him. It was open to him to discuss it; but after he had taken his position and we had taken ours, I do not suppose there would have been much to accomplish by discussion. We knew where we were and where he was. That is the position of the matter, and I leave it to the House to say whether or not, under such circumstances, we have not given to Mr. Haultain, and Mr. Bulyea, the members representing the Northwest government, every opportunity to be heard by us and to have their views represented to us and thoroughly discussed. Every impartial man who reads the letter of Mr. Haultain will come to the conclusion, after the explanation that I have given to the House, that there was nothing to complain of on his part. The subject was thoroughly threshed out on the first day on which it was taken up, and after that we placed before the House the result of our deliberations.

Now, this is all I have to say on this question at the present time. My hon. friend has again pressed me for information on other subjects. I do not think that on such an occasion I am called on to give my hon. friend more information than I have given on former occasions.

It will be the duty of the government, in due time, to give to my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) and to the House every information that is necessary for the discussion of the Bill. My hon. friend has asked me if we contemplate amendments to the Bill. I do not know, Sir, that any wrong will be done to anybody if we are contemplating amendments. Would it be the first time that a government when introducing a measure should endeavour to see whether or not it was possible to satisfy all sections of the country in regard to that measure? In view of the petitions that have been presented to the House, some coming from one quarter and other petitions coming from another side, would it be wrong if the government would say: We will reconsider our position and see whether or not we can satisfy this country? I am sorry my hon. friend has treated the subject a little more lightly than I would have expected him to do on an occasion of this kind. What is the spectacle we have to-day? We have the spectacle of numerous petitions being presented asking that the educational clauses should be withdrawn from the Bill and numerous other petitions asking that the Bill should be passed as it is. This is a very delicate subject. It is not the first time this question of education has come before the House. It is not the first time it has engaged the attention of the country and upon every occasion that it has come before the House, in 1872-73 with regard to the New Brunswick school question, in 1875,

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with regard to the school question again, and in 1896, whenever it has come before the country there has always been an exhibition of strong public sentiment and of contrary opinions. Sir, under such circumstances, if the government were thinking: 'Well we may consider again the position we have taken; we may again look at what we are going to do,' is there any man on that side or on this side of the House, or without the House throughout this broad country who would say that the government was not doing right in thinking twice before taking a final step upon this question? Sir, I claim that I have some sense of the responsibility that attaches to the government and to those who are entrusted with the administration of the affairs of the country, and, in a question of this kind especially, whenever such a matter is brought up the government is faced with a difficulty which perhaps it has not anticipated and finding difficulties which no man could have foreseen, viewing the virulence with which passions are roused, perhaps, Sir, there is some reason why a government should be slow to take any action and should hesitate in coming to a final decision. I have spoken of the virulence of the passions exhibited. I do not say that offensively; I know that would be greatly mistaken if I were to say anything offensively on this point. I would not do so; I know that public passions, strong passions, are not always ignoble; sometimes on the contrary, they are only the exaggeration of a noble sentiment, but even the exaggeration of a noble sentiment may lead to outbursts of public passion. I say to my hon. friend, if he wants to know, that this subject gives me a great deal to think about, and if it be possible to amend this Bill the government need not fear to consider the matter. More than this I will not say at present. This I will say, that we are thinking upon these matters, that it is our duty to do so and the result of our deliberations shall be given in due time to the House, but at this present moment, I think I have given to my hon. friend all the answer to which he is entitled.

Mr. W. B. NORTHRUP (East Hastings). Mr. Speaker, although the House can hardly congratulate itself that the right hon. gentleman who so ably leads it (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) has shed any great flood of light upon the questions submitted to him, still, day by day, as question follows question we do elicit information, and in due time if the Bill continues to be delayed and if only as much information leaks out every day as has so far leaked out we will at all events be able to discuss the matter when it comes before us with a light of understanding that certainly was lacking in the first instance. To-day the right hon. gentleman has accepted the statement of Mr. Haultain as to the facts laid down in his letter and he has