

Saying no more about that, if this department is, for the reasons that the right hon. First Minister stated, vacant and has been vacant for ever so long it ought to be an additional reason and a very strong additional reason why other departments which are vacant or virtually vacant in this House should be filled up. For instance, take the Department of the Interior. The minister himself of that department for a long time, by reason of illness, was unable to be at the department. I suppose there is no department of this government which has so varied a range of interests and requires so much a constant, steady and firm head as the Department of the Interior. The hon. gentleman who was the minister has been away from that department for a considerable length of time. Changes took place whilst he was away, changes which have never been explained to this House. The deputy minister retired or was forced to retire, I do not know which, and a new man was placed in the department. There is an additional reason why there should be some responsible head of the department. With its varied interests, with its multiplied avenues of approach—approach for all kinds of influences extending from the administration of the gold regions in the far north down all through an immense range of territory in Canada itself, with its branches all over the United States of America and all over Europe as well there is not a department which lends itself so much to abuse and to results which inevitably arise from the want of careful and firm handling than that very same department. There have been things said against that department and they are said against that department now. The right hon. gentleman has not read the newspapers and moved up and down Canada without knowing all these things. For that reason then, and when a new deputy minister takes hold, nominally, there should be a strong, firm and responsible man at the head of the department. During the whole session we have not been able to get any information from the Interior Department such as we should have got. There has not been a question of moment brought up because there has been no person in the House representing the department to answer for the department. The right hon. gentleman who leads the government says: I am nominally the head of the department. 'Nominally' that is the correct word. It is absolutely impossible for him to master the details of that department with the multiplied duties that he has as premier—absolutely impossible and still that portfolio remains open? Why? Because of lack of material? The Prime Minister will not say that. In his easy way he has rather attributed it to an embarrassment of riches. Well, the right hon. gentleman cannot delay for ever. He can make up his mind quickly enough if he wishes to. He

Mr. FOSTER.

can delay just as long as any other man if it suits him to delay, but we know that at this very moment he has within his mind's eye the man he proposes to appoint as Minister of the Interior. Why does he not have him go to the west? Is he afraid that his Bill will be through before the election can be carried out. I think he can possess his soul in patience so far as that is concerned. He will have ample time to send his man to the Northwest Territories and give one single, solitary opportunity, the only one, of permitting the Northwest a voice of allowing one portion at least of the people of the Northwest Territories to pronounce upon the policy of this Bill which is so all important to that great western country. The right hon. leader of the government, stickler for precedent that he is when he is out of office, puts it lightly away when he assumes the badge of office. He erects into a constitutional principle what had never before been taken is a constitutional principle in order to serve a purpose. The purpose once served he throws away his invention, he has no use for it, until another circumstance arises which will call for another constitutional principle. What is his constitutional principle? It was adverted to by my hon. friend here (Mr. R. L. Borden). It was the result of a circumstance which was none too creditable to the government of my right hon. friend. An hon. gentleman went into a department in the temporary absence of another minister meddled in a matter of its administration and so brought about some considerable confusion in the government of this country. It was then that the new constitutional principle was devised, invented, brought out brand new, that there was a geographical ministerial responsibility as well as a constitutional responsibility—all very good for the occasion and yet when you have a great part of this country to be erected into provinces, to be, by an irrevocable decree fashioned, moulded and formed the right hon. gentleman refuses to consult with the representatives of the government of that country. He brings down here at his own express request and call the only representatives that are available of these two great Territories—the premier and one of his cabinet, backed up, as I said the other day, by a third member of his cabinet. When he gets them here he throws them lightly aside, at least the Tory part of the representation, he finds sources of information in his own way and he refuses almost absolutely upon the most important part of his Bill to recognize the legal and constitutional representative of that portion of the country for which this Bill is being specially provided. As he himself says this is the most momentous of questions before the House affecting absolutely and particularly that portion of the country, and yet he will not either test the feeling of the people of that country, or what is of much more im-