

Of the four questions which are to be embodied in provincial autonomy, the education question was in the mind of the right hon. gentleman the most important. I again ask the Prime Minister are we to believe, are we to suppose, that in the preparation of the speech from the Throne, which was prepared during the early part of this year, the Minister of the Interior was in no wise consulted in respect to these four planks? I for one refuse to take that view, because I do not think the ex-Minister of the Interior is so ignorant with respect to the contents of this Bill as he would leave this House and this country to believe. Reference has been made to the creating of a vacancy. What do we find in the city of Toronto? We find a bargain day for the Conservative party. Why have we a bargain day now? Is this the old system of the Liberal party of this country, when they have a government backed up by a large majority and a seat becomes vacant, is it now the new Liberal policy to give the Conservative party a bargain day and to allow them to elect their candidate by acclamation? I have here the statement of the executive of the Reform Association of the city of Toronto. We have the candidate in the last contest coming to the city of Ottawa, consulting with the Prime Minister and his cabinet, going back to Toronto and advising the Liberal executive of the city of Toronto not to put up a candidate, refusing to be a candidate himself and saying that it was not a wise policy to put a candidate in the field; and, therefore, the Liberal party are going to allow the Conservative candidate to be elected by acclamation. Why is this? Is that the way to ascertain public opinion in this country on an important question of this kind? I venture to say that if the right hon. gentleman had an election in Toronto he would find that the policy which he is now pursuing would be rejected, not only by the Conservative party of Toronto, but by a very large number of the Liberals as well. I would like to ask the premier, if he has any influence upon the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) or upon the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Greenway), one the late premier of the province of Manitoba and the other one of his ministers, to kindly whisper into the ears of these gentlemen the suggestion that they should stay a little more in this chamber and give the people of this country the benefit of their presence and advice, even as private members. Is it any wonder that members of the opposition find fault with the government, when we find important members like these absenting themselves when one of the greatest and most important issues ever brought up in parliament is being discussed from day to day? They absolutely refuse, by their absence from this House, to take part in the discussion. I am sure it would allay, to some extent, the feeling of the people of this country if they knew that men entertained the views which

the late premier of Manitoba did entertain—I do not know if he does now or not—but certainly the views entertained by the ex-Minister of the Interior, were to stay in their places in this House and give us the benefit of their views from time to time as occasion requires. Then probably they would assist in allaying the strong feeling that exists in this country that these gentlemen are overlooking the interests of the Northwest Territories by their undue absence from this House. The Prime Minister referred to-day to the fact that the opposition are making a great deal of capital out of the thirty-one days of non-appointment of a Minister of the Interior. Let me point out to my hon. friend that the Minister of the Interior has not been in this House during this session. He came in after the introduction of this Bill. Let me remind the premier that since 1896 we have had minister after minister absent from their duties during the session, and no one has been a greater sinner in that respect than the Minister of the Interior. To-day he is seen passing by this chamber, paying attention for a moment or two to the proceedings here, but then, in his high and lofty way, he retires from the chamber and allows the members to discuss these important matters in his absence. It is high time that these hon. gentlemen fully understood that it is their duty to attend in this chamber and give us the benefit of their advice on these important matters. If the right hon. gentleman and his friends were correct in 1895, when they said that it was important for ministers to be in their places, they should take a little of their own medicine to-day, and see that their ministers are in their places in this House.

Mr. W. H. BENNETT (East Simcoe). Mr. Speaker, I usually agree with the leader of the opposition, but I think he is rather too exacting this afternoon. My hon. friend asks that the First Minister should go back on his official record since he has been premier of this Dominion, and start from this day on a new course. That is altogether too much to ask of the First Minister, and I think my hon. friend the leader of the opposition is rather drawing on his imagination when he expects that the First Minister will do it. My hon. friend referred to the fact that the First Minister found fault with the government of Sir John Thompson on one occasion for not filling up his cabinet and complained that at that time for nearly two days two ministers had absented themselves from the chamber. Well, Sir, the circumstances were very different then from what they are now. Neither of these hon. gentlemen had resigned his seat; the present premier was not in a position to know that either intended to resign his seat; but the fact that they had not been in their places, and some newspaper comment which he saw on the cir-