

Autonomy for the Territories.

MR. R. L. BORDEN referred from his place in Parliament last week to the session being about to close without the government bringing down any measure for autonomy in the Northwest Territories. We believe that experienced men will go slow before tackling so big a job as the conferring of provincial status upon the Northwest Territories. In the first place the representative men from that part of the Dominion say that it would be an injustice to the Territories to apportion a permanent allowance to the Territories based on a population which is comparatively small but rapidly growing. Moreover it is inexpedient so soon after a very warm agitation, brought on in consequence of religious principles or prejudices to again plunge the people of this country into the excitement that would undoubtedly result from the manner in which school and other questions would have to be handled, before a complete working plan could be concluded.

The Territories are going rapidly ahead and are enjoying a largely increased allowance from the Dominion in fact more than double the amount paid over only two or three years ago. If the people of the Territories were laboring under any disabilities, if they were suffering any acute injustice, if, indeed, they had any well founded grievances consequent upon limited authority, something might be said in favor of pressing the government to grant autonomy, but that is far from being the case. They are today a self-governing people. They pass their own laws and administer them; they have their own

courts of justice, and in fact they have practically everything which the provinces have except the power to borrow money, and that is not a very great drawback.

The discussion which must precede a measure of this kind has been going on between the government at Regina and the government at Ottawa for several years. It was found at the very outset, that although Mr. Haultain, the premier of the Territorial government, was in favor of erecting one province out of the Territories, and was able to secure a mandate for that policy from the Assembly where he had a majority, there was a minority in favor of asking for two or more provinces, and in addition, there is even a larger question to be viewed from a national standpoint, as to whether the whole of that immense territory, and of the enormous provinces which comprise it, should be erected under one provincial government or even under two. A single government representing all these millions of square miles of territory, with the rapidly growing population, brought in at the general expense of Canada, might in a few years grow to overshadow almost any other province in the Dominion. The territory represented would be so great, that as compared to it almost all of the territory of the rest of the Dominion would be a mere speck. Questions of finance, Crown lands, railways, Indians, industrial schools, public schools, separate schools, would have to be all worked out in a scheme, and for Mr. R. L. Borden to wish us at present to rush in, is an adventure on which wiser men would fear to embark.