

unit in demanding for themselves the same powers of self-government which are enjoyed by the people of the older provinces. The Minister of the Interior (Hon. Mr. Sifton) recognized some time ago—whether he does now or not—the importance of this subject, because on the 21st of March, 1901, three years ago, in writing to the premier of the Northwest Territories he said:

I may say that I realize very fully the difficulties of the position in which the government and legislative assembly of the Northwest Territories is placed, and I admit that there is very much in the suggestions which are made in your letter and in the memorial regarding the necessity of a change in the constitutional and financial position of the Territories.

Without at the present moment committing myself to any positive statement I am prepared to say that the time has arrived when the question of organizing the Territories on the provincial basis ought to be the subject of full consideration. It would appear to me that the better way of bringing the matter to a more definite position would be to arrange for a conference upon the subject between the representatives of your government and a committee of council representing the federal government.

That meeting has, I believe, taken place. The matter has been occupying the attention of the government for three years. My hon. friend from North Ontario (Mr. Grant) said that the question of tariff revision was now about to occupy the attention of the government. Well, if the government do not proceed any more rapidly with tariff revision than with provincial autonomy, three years will elapse before there will be any tariff revision and I do not know how much longer afterwards. Sir, the people of the Northwest Territories are entitled to the same rights of self-government as are enjoyed by the people of the older provinces. According to the census and according to the estimate made by the government of the number of settlers who went into that country last year, there are no fewer than 350,000 people in the Territories, and I have no doubt that by midsummer the population will perhaps be 400,000. Why should not the right of self-government be granted to them; why should they not have the same rights over their public domain, their lands and minerals as are enjoyed by the provinces of eastern Canada? Why should not the people of the Northwest Territories be entitled, if they see fit, to incur debt for the purpose of giving to themselves adequate railway development. The railway which is proposed by the government is a single line of railway running across the continent and no such line of railway unless it has sufficient branches, can ever meet the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories. They know best what they desire in that respect. They know what branch lines are necessary; and if the people of Prince Edward Island, if the people of British Columbia, a province with a small population but with enormous re-

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sources; if the people of the maritime provinces are entitled to deal with their lands and minerals; if they are entitled to incur debt for railway development and for other necessary purposes; why should not 400,000 people in the Territories have the same right. On what principle, for what reason is this right denied to them? At present they have no right to incorporate a railway company; they have no right to control their public lands or minerals; they have no power to incur debt; they cannot incorporate a manufacturing company, or a transportation company, or a telegraph company, or an irrigation company, as stated by the Prime Minister of the Northwest Territories, and as I believe stated correctly. This matter has been under the consideration of the government, but it has not been deemed worthy of even passing mention in the speech from the Throne, three years after the Minister of the Interior said that it should receive the immediate attention of the government. And Sir, when last session the right hon. the Prime Minister was quoted as having expressed his belief, that many years should elapse before the people of the Northwest Territories ought to enjoy these full rights of self-government; he reiterated his approval of that sentiment by saying 'hear, hear,' in response to my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. Roche). On the other hand, the Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Fielding) led us to believe, so far as one can understand his language, that this question would be taken up by the government during the coming session. An election was then considered somewhat imminent—I do not know whether that fact had any influence on the Minister of Finance at that time—but at all events, we have the usual spectacle that whenever the language of the Prime Minister is quoted as favouring the delay for many years in granting self-government of the Territories; against that is quoted the language of the Finance Minister which points to an exactly opposite conclusion. I would have thought, Sir, that this question of provincial autonomy was worthy of mention in the speech from the Throne, but it may be that I have misunderstood the attitude of the government on that policy. Let me refer for a moment to the attitude of the Minister of the Interior. Last year I advocated in this House that the people of the Northwest Territories might well be entitled to the control of their own public lands and minerals; and I pointed out cogent reasons why the people of the Territories should not longer remain in tutelage, and should not for ever be under the control of the federal government. I took occasion to refer to certain safeguards which might be employed by this government so that the handing over of these Territories to the control of the people of the province might not be attended with any danger to the public interest. And, Sir, if anything were necessary to make it plain that this government