

ther any one could see those plans; and if it were necessary to ask that question, what made it necessary, except that some one was looking for information contained in the plans and had gone to the deputy minister to ask for the information, and out of that fact had arisen the necessity for the inquiry. At what stage would it be premature for the hon. gentleman to approve of these plans or to investigate them? Can it be said to be contemplated by section 122 of the Railway Act that the minister, the moment he gets the plans that are to be prepared under that section, can seal them up so that neither he, nor his colleagues, nor parliament, nor the railway company themselves can see them or inspect them? If that be so for a period of seven months, why may it not be so for ten years? I hope the hon. gentleman will accede to the reasonable request from this side of the House, and will show cogent reasons why, at any rate, he should not loosen, with regard to these particular plans, that principle which he says has been inaugurated in his department, and that he will see his way to allow this motion to pass.

Mr. FOSTER. Just one word more, if the House will allow me. If the First Minister were here I would make an appeal to him with reference to the principle involved in this matter; as he is not here, and the Minister of Finance I imagine, is leading the House, I will say to him that I think it would be a pity if affirmation were to be made that the House assembled here has not a right to have a document such as this brought down if it wishes it. If this motion is negatived, of course it will affirm that principle. I call the attention of the Minister of Finance to the fact that I do not think any real reason has been given why the public interest would be harmed if they were brought down at once. Then if we have not a reason given, is it not rather perilous to affirm a principle which in effect would be this, that the House is not master of the documents which one of its servants, in the form of a member of the government, has in his possession, and has kept sealed in his possession for months?

Mr. FIELDING. I am afraid that I cannot agree with my hon. friend that the House is about to affirm any dangerous principle. Certainly that is not our intention; nor is it the intention of this House to affirm the principle that parliament has not a right to every public document in relation to all public affairs. But it is a question of discretion. It is a constant practice for a minister, here and elsewhere, when a motion is made for papers, to say that in his judgment it is not wise to submit those papers to the House.

Mr. FOSTER. Is that sufficient without a reason?

Mr. BOYCE.

Mr. FIELDING. The minister has given a reason. My hon. friend may not accept the reason. For myself I would say that any unfinished transaction might not necessarily be a proper matter to submit to the House. Any matter which is pending and left unfinished might properly be withheld from the knowledge of the public until the discussion is completed. In that aspect of the question, the minister does not say that the House has no right to these papers, he simply says that in his judgment, and for the reasons he has given, he thinks it would not be wise to bring these papers down at the present time. There is no danger in affirming a principle of that character. We are only affirming what is done in all parliaments under the British system for reasons which, in the mind of the minister, he deems to be sufficient. Sometimes hon. gentlemen might regard them as insufficient, but that is always a matter of opinion and judgment.

Motion negatived on division.

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES—PRESENTATION OF DOCUMENTS.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). The House will hardly desire to proceed further with the Orders. Before moving the adjournment, if any hon. gentleman has nothing else to bring up, I desire to submit some papers to the House. I lay on the table a copy of the School Ordinances of the Northwest Territories, chaps. 29, 30 and 31, passed in 1901. I also lay on the table a memorandum giving a summary of legislation relating to subsidies to the provinces. These are documents which have been asked for by hon. gentlemen opposite. They are both printed, and will be in the distribution office to-night or to-morrow morning. I have sufficient copies to-night to hand a few around. I also submit a statement showing the areas of the provisional districts of the Northwest Territories, and other information with respect to lands in the Northwest Territories, numbers of settlers and so forth, these being papers which were asked for. They are not in printed form, and I think it would be better to suspend the rule at once and ask the House to agree to have them printed. I would therefore move that the rule be suspended for the purpose of having these printed.

Mr. FOSTER. Is that all? Is there nothing else to come before the House in connection with the Northwest Territories?—Because the First Minister promised that before the sitting closed we would have something with regard to amendments to the Bill.

Mr. FIELDING. Immediately on the adjournment I will send to my hon. friend a copy of the amendment, which will be placed on the notice paper. I do not think I

need to read it, but I will furnish my hon. friend at once with a copy.

Motion agreed to.

On motion of Mr. Fielding, House adjourned at 11.25 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

TUESDAY, March 21, 1905.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

VACANCY.

Mr. SPEAKER. I have the honour to inform the House that my attention having been called, by the hon. member for Toronto North, in his place, to the fact of the demise of Edward Frederick Clarke, Esq., member for the electoral district of Toronto Centre, I have, in accordance with section 8 of chapter 13 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, issued my warrant to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery to make out a new writ of election for the said electoral district.

THE TELEPHONE QUESTION.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM MULOCK (Postmaster General moved :

That Messrs. Bergeron and Geoffrion be added to the committee appointed on Friday last to consider the telephone question.

Motion agreed to.

PACKING AND SALE OF CERTAIN COMMODITIES.

Bill (No. 121) to amend the Act respecting the packing and sale of staple commodities—Mr. Fisher—read the second time and House went into committee thereon.

On section 1—dimensions of apple boxes, penalty; certain packages excepted.

Mr. HENDERSON. I regret that I am again obliged to enter my strongest protest against the passage of this Bill in the form in which it is at present worded. I do not conceive that it is in the interests of the trade of Canada that the Bill should be so worded. The hon. minister has told the House in discussing the resolution on which this Bill is founded that the fruit associations of this country have described the size of box in which apples should be packed for export. I think the minister should have laid upon the table of the House some resolution of some fruit association to show us where the authority came from for fixing the special size of box which is prescribed in this Bill. In sections of the country where the fruit industry is extensively carried on there is a very strong protest against

the size of box here prescribed, and it is the more strange to me that the hon. minister should have given us that information, inasmuch as the gentlemen from whom I obtained information are members of fruit associations, and no doubt were present at some of those meetings when the matter of the size of the apple box was discussed. The difference between the minister and myself is this: I have proposed that a box should be designated in the Act, the size of which would be some well known quantity. For example, I suggested that the box should contain one-quarter of a barrel. The standard barrel of apples is a well known measure. In the old country apples are sold by the barrel, and people there understand what a barrel of apples is. We have fixed by law the size of a barrel of apples and the quantity is known amongst us—and, I believe, correctly—as three bushels. If we are going to authorize the shipment of apples in boxes containing less than a barrel, I contend that these boxes should contain some well defined, specific quantity that would be well understood by the purchaser in the old country. The box defined by the Minister of Agriculture is a nondescript box which represents practically nothing specific. It is not one-fourth of a barrel; it is not one-third of a barrel; it is no definite fraction of a barrel that the people will understand. It is less than one-third of a barrel and it is larger than one-quarter of a barrel. To my mind, the box that would hold one-quarter of a barrel would be a very much better package than one that contains no definite fraction of a barrel. When this matter was last discussed, the Minister of Agriculture almost insinuated that my object in advocating a smaller box was that the shippers in this country might take advantage of the buyers in the old country and sell them a smaller quantity with a view of enhancing the price. I had no such intention or thought, but I do tell the minister that the use of the box which he has described will have the effect of defrauding the people of the old country. The purchaser will naturally ask how much there is in the box, and he will be told it is a bushel, or one-third of a barrel, when, as a matter of fact, it is not.

Mr. CAMPBELL. How much is it short?

Mr. HENDERSON. It is very considerably short. The minister shakes his head, but I can tell him that he is all wrong; he has taken his information from young men, who have not the experience of practical men in the business, who have investigated the matter. Three boxes of the size prescribed in this Bill will not fill a barrel; a fact which has been demonstrated by practical test. The box which the minister proposes will contain the contents in cubic inches of one-third of a barrel, but he forgets that there is much waste of space when you pack three or four packages instead of one barrel, there being a large amount