

Mr. SCOTT. Not an undue proportion; a fair proportion.

Mr. PERLEY. Well, perhaps I should have said a larger proportionate representation according to population than other parts of the country. It was our own business then, but in this case we are simply trying to set the machinery in motion for these new provinces, and I think it is beneath the dignity of this parliament to take sides against one part or the other part of these new provinces. The case cited by my hon. friend (Mr. Scott) is another matter altogether. In that case we were providing seats for our own parliament; in this case we are legislating for provincial constituencies, and I submit that in all fairness as between the different sections of that country, and in order to make the people satisfied and happy, we ought as nearly as possible give every man the same power in voting at this first provincial election. Afterwards the province can divide the constituencies as it thinks fit, and I shall be quite content. I ask whether it is right that this parliament should apparently—and I cannot see any other object in it—take sides with the north as against the south in this matter.

Mr. SCOTT. No. I contend that this parliament is under full responsibility to do the fair thing in the premises, and I think that to do anything less for more than half the area of the province, the district of Athabaska, would not be doing the fair thing. My hon. friend admits that the whole matter hinges on the question of the capital. If he looks at the map, he will find that the centre of the province is 100 miles north of Edmonton. Yet our friends in the south are contending that they should have the privilege, while they compose perhaps nearly half the population of fixing the capital far south of the centre. Mainly because that is the question, I say it is the duty of this parliament to see that fair-play is granted to the northern portion of the province.

Mr. BARKER. Does my hon. friend contend that if the electorate of the province met to-day, they would grant two seats to Athabaska?

Mr. SCOTT. If the same rules of justice and fair-play prevailed in the legislature, they would.

Mr. BARKER. Does my hon. friend believe, without any ifs, that if the electorate of the proposed province met to-day, they would set apart two seats for Athabaska and twenty-three for the rest of the province?

Mr. SCOTT. I will tell my hon. friend what I do believe. If every man in Alberta were given the opportunity to vote on the question by a plebiscite, the capital would be placed at Edmonton.

Mr. PERLEY.

Mr. BARKER. I am not talking about the capital. I am talking about the distribution of seats, and I ask the hon. gentleman, if the electorate of the proposed province met to-morrow, does he believe they would give two seats to Athabaska?

Mr. SCOTT. I think they would.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The hon. gentleman took a long time to screw his courage up to that point. The argument is really delicious in the mouths of the hon. gentlemen on the other side—because perhaps 2,000 people, or at the outside estimate 5,000, are scattered over a portion of Athabaska, they should have two members, although that is at least four or five times the proportion assigned to other parts of the province.

Mr. SCOTT. That is not the whole argument.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. It is the main argument.

Mr. SCOTT. It is only half of it.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. It is the best half of it.

Mr. SCOTT. This distribution is to prevail for four years, and we believe that before the end of those four years there will be a vast population in that part of the territory.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What reason is there to expect that it will develop more than the other parts?

Mr. SCOTT. Because there will be railroad construction.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. There will be no railroad construction before there will be a redistribution for a general election.

Mr. SCOTT. I venture to prophesy that when that redistribution takes place, the legislature will not take away these two seats if they are granted now. On the contrary, I venture to say that that representation will be increased.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not propose to match my hon. friend in prophesying; he is much better at that than I am. If it is a good argument that because there is a large territory there should be this extraordinary representation, how does it happen that the hon. gentleman has been so blind to that consideration during the last nine years? The Northwest Territories, with a small population, it is true, but with an area exceeding all the rest of the Dominion of Canada two or three times over, according to the argument now put forward, should have been represented in this House by fifty or sixty members instead of four from 1896 to 1900, and from 1900 to 1904; yet I never heard the hon. gentleman or any of the other members from the Northwest Territories advance any such argument during the time they have been in this House.