

him so, who may be a political supporter of his, and who wished to furnish him with an argument in order to bolster up his scheme. Hon. gentlemen on that side have taken the ground that if Mr. Haultain and the territorial members were not in accord with this redistribution, he should have summoned the territorial assembly and made a protest. I would ask the hon. gentleman if he is serious in making such an assertion. What encouragement has the premier of the Territories had in the past to call a special session of the legislature, to put the country to the expense of having seven by-elections, to go through the farce of approving or disapproving anything when this government would not be guided by their decision? When that government unanimously sent down here a draft Bill asking for the retention of their public domain, was this government guided by the decision of the Territories in that respect? And if they were not, how could we expect them to be guided in regard to the distribution of seats? I think the Minister of the Interior himself would be the first to take the stump against the local government to try to impress upon the people what a useless waste of public money it was to put the country to the expense of holding seven by-elections and calling a special session of the legislature to pass upon something which lay entirely in the discretion of this government.

I would ask the hon. gentlemen, do they object to the judges deciding this matter? If they are confident of the justice of their cause, why should they object to getting a judicial redistribution, the very means that they themselves proposed in 1899? Why should they object to handing over this case, if it is so just and fair as they pretend, to three judges of the Supreme Court of the Territories, two of whom have been appointed by this government since they came into power? I should say that if they felt convinced they had a good case they would not at all object to referring it to these judges for a decision, men who would be entirely independent of political influence, or even if they did not refer it to the judges, then, as the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) suggests it might be referred to any other tribunal whose decision could be relied on by both political parties, in whom both political parties would have confidence. If that were done the commissioners, whoever they might be, would be on the ground, they would be acquainted with the country, they would have the advice and opinion of the local members which we have not at present, and they could hear the evidence of any witnesses they wished to hear and so could decide that question much more competently than it could be decided by the members of this House.

At six o'clock, Committee took recess.

Mr. W. J. ROCHF

### After Recess.

Committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I thought we might have the advantage of hearing from the right hon. Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) in regard to the suggestion which I made in the afternoon, as to the figures which I then mentioned and which were admitted by my hon. friend the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) this afternoon. I pointed out to the right hon. Prime Minister at that time that out of an estimated population of 250,000 there are only 5,000 in this part of the province to which two members are to be allotted under the Bill. I must confess that I do not see how that position can be defended. The Minister of the Interior made some rather lengthy remarks, and if I may be permitted to say so, without intending any disrespect, he treated the subject from a very trivial and rather unworthy standpoint. It is idle for any hon. gentleman to assert that the welfare of the province of Alberta requires that 245,000 people shall be represented by 23 members in the legislative assembly, and that 5,000 at the outside, taking what I believe to be a very extravagant estimate, must be represented by two members. That is an argument which it is not necessary for us to meet or controvert. It answers itself. No possible reason can be suggested in support of that assertion. There are no physical difficulties, there are no difficulties or conditions of any kind, which make it necessary or expedient or proper, or right, or fair, or honest, to adopt any such measure of representation as that which is proposed. If there be any such, surely we have the right to know what they are. I have not heard of any and certainly the Minister of the Interior has not even suggested remotely any reason which would weigh in the slightest degree to that end. There is no expectation of greater development in that district than in the other districts. There is a population admitted by us for the purpose of argument, although we conceive that the estimate of the minister as to the population in that district is absurdly extravagant; but, yet, taking it for the moment as being fair and reliable, it is an estimate which does not at all justify any such distribution as that which has been proposed. Further, we could offset against the estimate of the hon. minister—an estimate based upon hearsay information derived from persons whom we do not know, whom we have not seen, the exact details of which we have not before us—other estimates, estimates which have been published in reliable and respectable journals in the west, and which may be presumed to be founded on information quite as good as that which has been acted upon by the hon. Minister of the Interior. If we are to act upon estimates of