

the time we are creating these new provinces. We would not want in the slightest degree to be unjust to the new provinces. I am not suggesting that. We want to be generous to them in every possible way. They are deserving not only of fair but of generous treatment from this parliament. I am merely suggesting this for the purpose of convenience, because when parliament is creating these new provinces, it would be much more convenient, it seems to me, to treat the whole subject from the standpoint of some better principle, if it can be found, than it will be years afterwards, or even one or two years afterwards, when these provinces may be calling upon this government to make good certain claims which my hon. friend the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) foresaw in respect to the question of lands, for example. I do not know whether the government have taken the question of the revision of subsidies sufficiently into consideration to give to the House any information as to what their proposals are at this moment. I would infer not, from what my right hon. friend has said, but I can only express my regret that the government have not been able to overtake that question, if they do propose to deal with it, in time to present it to the House concurrently with the question we are now considering. It may be that it is impossible to do so. I know how much political duties interfere with administrative and executive duties on the part of any government, but still I think it is a matter for very great regret that the question is not dealt with at this time if it is proposed to deal with it in the near future.

Mr. BERGERON. I hope my right hon. friend the Prime Minister has some other reason than the one he gives, because it seems that he wants to give the committee to understand that he came to the conclusion to double the limit of population of the Northwest Territories because these new provinces were starting with double the population that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had at the time of confederation.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. More than double the territory.

Mr. BERGERON. I understood my right hon. friend to say that we are going to double the limit of population in these Territories because they are starting with a great deal larger population than the maritime provinces which were limited to 400,000. He was reminded immediately by my hon. friend the Minister of Finance, that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had together more population in 1867 than the new provinces have to-day. Therefore, my right hon. friend must have another reason than the one he gave for doubling the limit of population in the Northwest Territories.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Perhaps I did not express my idea correctly. The popu-

lation of these two provinces must eventually be much larger. They have each a population of 250,000 now and they are only commencing to keep house. They have ten times the territory that the maritime provinces have, and therefore, as they must have a much larger population, they require more revenue.

Mr. BERGERON. That is later on, but my right hon. friend will remember that they have not so many people to-day as the maritime provinces had in 1867.

Mr. FIELDING. It must be admitted that there was no logical reason for adopting the 400,000 limit in the original Act of confederation and there is no very logical reason for adopting the 800,000 in this. It is an estimate of the probable growth, and we know that in these Territories the growth is likely to be much more rapid than in the maritime provinces, but my own judgment is that before this arrangement has been in operation a few years the whole question will have to be considered in the light of what has been said to-day, and then perhaps the system will have to be general in its application. In the meantime, with all the weakness of the system, what can we do to-day but conform to the principles laid down in the British North America Act?

Mr. SPROULE. I wanted to ask the hon. Minister of Finance if he had collated any data regarding the finances of the different states, as to what they do in regard to their financial arrangements and whether, in view of our experience—because it was an experiment for us and our experience has not been perfectly satisfactory—the government have considered any other plan for supplying a revenue, and if there is any correspondence between Mr. Haultain and the government of the Northwest Territories and this government in regard to the subject?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. No.

Mr. FIELDING. I think I am correct in stating that in the United States they have no system in regard to subsidies at all but that each state has to regulate its own finances. I admit that there is something to be said in favour of the provinces doing so here if we could start afresh. I want to say a word in defence of the fathers of confederation, and I am not very much given to defending the fathers of confederation in reference to the financial arrangements that were adopted at the time of confederation. If we had been dealing with the provinces as we are now dealing with the provinces of the west we might have demanded from them such terms as we pleased. We might have said: Get your taxation in any way you please. But, that was not the condition in 1867. Each of these provinces was an independent body when it was asked to come in, and the fright at the idea of direct taxation which