

Dominion government from time to time and ask to be recouped in the form of an increase in their subsidy which might represent—I do not say it does—extravagance rather than a wise and economic expenditure of money. I think we should adopt some principle with reference to the new provinces that would not be subject to the same difficulties and drawbacks that have occurred in regard to the other provinces. I think experience has proved that the principle we have acted upon is not a good one, and we should learn from that experience and shape our policy accordingly.

Mr. FIELDING. The lands clause will come up a little later, when that question may very well be considered. I mentioned, in the remarks which I addressed to the House on the second reading of the Bill, that I might desire to make some changes in the financial clauses, not as affecting their amounts, but as to their form; and when we come to the land clauses, I will have a suggestion to offer which may perhaps in part meet my hon. friend's views in reference to the lands. We are hardly in a position to-day, however, with this measure before us, to take up the general question of a readjustment of provincial subsidies. That is a very large question, and will require very careful consideration.

Mr. BERGERON. Is there any proposal to do that?

Mr. FIELDING. The provinces have no question in their own mind that they want it, but there is no proposal at present with the government to deal with the matter, although it is constantly agitated. My hon. friend the Premier has expressed the opinion that the day is not far distant when that question will have to be considered, not merely on behalf of Quebec, but on behalf of all the provinces; and if a change is made, it must be on some principle that will apply to all. The essence of the proposal of the provinces was that the limitations with regard to population should be removed. In the resolutions which were adopted by the provincial premiers some years ago in Quebec, I think they included a provision that they should receive eighty cents per head up to a certain population, but that where a population was thickly settled and its needs would not be so great as those of a population sparsely settled, the subsidy for the additional population should be sixty cents a head.

Mr. BERGERON. When was that?

Mr. FIELDING. I think that was at the conference in 1887, and it was adopted by all the provinces. I think their demand is now practically a revival of the demand of that conference. The last conference was about a year or eighteen months ago, when the provincial premiers of the day, Colonel Prior of British Columbia, Mr. Roblin of Manitoba, Mr. Ross of Ontario, Mr.

Mr. SPROULE.

Parent of Quebec, Mr. Murray of Nova Scotia, Mr. Tweedie of New Brunswick and Mr. Peters of Prince Edward Island, met here. Although the record will speak for itself, my impression is that they simply revived the resolutions of the Quebec conference, the substance of which I have stated. To take up that whole matter and determine it finally is a large question, and as the Prime Minister said, some of these days we may have to do it, but I do not think the House is ready to do it to-day. In the meantime, it is admitted that we must proceed with this Bill with regard to the Northwest provinces, and we might as well deal with them in the same way as we have dealt with the other provinces; and if, one of these days a change is made, it must be made on some principle that will apply equally to all.

Mr. HENDERSON. While I do not agree generally with the hon. Finance Minister, I quite agree with him that the principle of granting subsidies to the provinces is all wrong. There was no other reason why eighty cents a head was paid to the different provinces than the fact that the revenues of the different provinces, which they derived from customs and excise had been taken away from them; and, in order to make good to them the revenues which they had lost by coming into confederation, they were paid eighty cents per head of their population, fixed I may say in a rather arbitrary manner, because, so far as the subsidies for Ontario and Quebec are concerned, they still remain on the basis of the population of 1861, while the subsidies to the other provinces are not so fixed. I am not complaining of that. The Minister of Finance has said that a country sparsely settled requires more per head than a country thickly settled. Assuming that the province of Quebec doubled its population, I do not know that it would cost very much more to govern it than it does at the present time, because the population might not be increased by reason of more territory being populated, but by reason of the population becoming more dense in the cities, towns and villages. However, what I want to draw attention to is this, that the principle is bad. I do not blame the fathers of confederation for the system they adopted in 1867. Possibly it was the only way out of the difficulty that they had to deal with. But we are on a different basis to-day. We are dealing with a province which has neither customs nor excise revenue. Why apply to such a province the same principle that was applied to the old provinces? It seems to me that an opportunity is offered now of getting rid of a bad principle, something we do not approve of, but the only one which so far as we can see could be acted upon in 1867.

I do not see anything in the argument that the principle which we think is not the best should be applied to the new provinces un-