

which nine out of ten of them will never read, and which the whole ten will fail to understand. I believe that the people of Canada, since this unpleasant question is brought before us, will expect us to meet it plainly and openly, and discuss it with the hope of finding a happy solution. So I put aside the constitutional question, not for a moment undervaluing it—

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The right hon. Prime Minister did not put it aside.

Mr. FIELDING. The Prime Minister did not discuss it in the sense that was attributed to him by the hon. gentleman.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not propose to go into that constitutional question, not because I say it should not receive any consideration, but because I say it is not the great question involved, and I prefer to go on and deal with the practical questions which are before us. If it is a constitutional question above all others, then, perhaps the best thing we can do will be to request the legal members of this House to adjourn to the Railway Committee room and thresh it out, while we who have not the good fortune to belong to that learned profession will stay down here and discuss the practical questions involved, or proceed with the ordinary business of the House. But, if it is the case that there are questions other than the constitutional question and greater than the constitutional question involved, these are the matters that I may venture to proceed to discuss before this House. Now, the first question to be considered, only for a moment, because, happily, there is no division of opinion upon it, is whether or not the time has come when we shall give a provincial constitution to these new Territories in the west. Happily, I say, there is no difference of opinion on that. It is now thirty-five years since these lands were acquired and brought under the control of the Canadian authorities. From the beginning, governments and legislatures have gone on preparing the people for the work of self-government. At an early stage the province of Manitoba was carved out and set up in housekeeping. At a later stage the Northwest Territories were given another form of organization. That form was developed from time to time and at this moment they have in the Northwest Territories a very considerable measure of self-government, but inasmuch as it falls short of the ordinary powers, privileges and authority of a province, we all agree that the time has come when we shall give a provincial constitution to the people who inhabit those lands.

Then, we come to the question whether these Territories shall come under the operation of one government, as at present, or whether they shall be divided into two or

more provinces. There is not much dispute on that point, happily. I think my hon. friend the leader of the opposition had previously entertained the view that one province was sufficient.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I never expressed any opinion on the subject.

Mr. FIELDING. I think some opinions have come from the other side of the House on that point. However, I am not saying that for the purpose of arguing it but I am only mentioning it incidentally. When we consider the question of the population of the Northwest Territories to-day we can readily agree that the population of the Territories is not too much for one province. The population in the Territories to-day is about the same as the population of one of our smaller provinces, or of the greatest of the maritime provinces. But, we are well aware of the fact that the population of the Territories will increase very rapidly, and inasmuch as there is a vast area of land to be occupied it has been deemed wise to divide the Territories into two portions and establish a separate government for each. There may be some difference of opinion on that point, but it is not a very serious difference and we may say that we are happily agreed that there shall be two provinces.

The next question to which we come is the question as to what shall be done with the Dominion lands. My hon. friend, (Mr. R. L. Borden) in the small portion of his speech in which he did not deal with the constitutional question, devoted himself to the question of Dominion lands. We have provided in this Bill that the Dominion lands shall be retained by the Dominion. My hon. friend takes very strong ground in favour of these lands being given over to the provinces. He argues that inasmuch as by the British North America Act the lands were left to the possession of the original provinces we should apply the same principle and leave these lands to the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. That argument is by no means conclusive. We know that there are strong reasons why these lands should be retained within the control of the Dominion. We have not the slightest doubt that during the development of the Northwest Territories it is a wise provision that the Dominion and not the provinces should retain the management and control of the public lands. My hon. friend can see no reason why a distinction should be made between our dealing with the land question in the case of the Northwest Territories and dealing with the land question in the case of the older provinces. Let me say to my hon. friend that we think there are strong reasons. The question of immigration is one which is properly assigned to the Dominion government. The question of immi-