

Territories on the other side of the House during this debate has expressed his apprehension that if these lands were handed over to the control and administration of the provinces we might expect maladministration. I venture to think that that suggestion should be repudiated by every hon. gentleman in this House and especially by every hon. gentleman from the Northwest Territories. I think these people are as fully alive to their rights, as fully alive to the necessity of utilizing the public domain in the public interest as the people of any part of Canada. The brief observation of the conditions in that country which I was enabled to make some two and a half years ago and my knowledge derived from some acquaintance with the public affairs of this country in connection with the Northwest Territories, would lead me to the conclusion that they are at least equally alive to the value of the public domain as are the people of the rest of Canada and certainly we might expect that the people of the Northwest Territories would be at least as much alive to the value of their own domain to themselves as the people of the whole of Canada would be alive to the value of that domain to the people of the Northwest Territories. We are referred to the example of the United States. Well, if we are to look to the example of the United States, do we find any very great encouragement so far as the hope of wise administration is concerned? I think that if we look to the example of the United States we would rather reach the opposite conclusion, than the one at which the Prime Minister has arrived. We would find in the United States that administration of distant territory in the departments of the government at Washington has not been conducive to good legislation, good administration, good executive action, and if I am not mistaken—although I have not refreshed my memory recently on this point—I think that the administration of public lands by the central government in the United States of America upon more than one occasion has been attended with grave scandals. For these reasons it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that the grounds advanced by the Prime Minister to the House in support of this policy are not well founded, and that it would be in the interest of the people in the provinces, in the interest of the people of Canada as a whole, to entrust the administration of those lands to the people of the provinces, and in doing that we would be doing exactly that which the British government has done so far as the public lands in Canada are concerned. Every one who has the slightest acquaintance with constitutional history knows that the idea of British statesmen years ago was to retain the control and administration of public lands of all the British dominions in North America, and to administer those lands not for the benefit of British subjects residing in

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

British North America, but for the benefit of the empire at large. That was the view expressed by British statesmen of years ago, that was the policy embarked upon by British statesmen years ago, that is precisely the policy on which the government of this country has embarked in connection with these lands in the Northwest Territories, and as the British government and British statesmen long years ago abandoned, and wisely abandoned, the policy upon which they then entered, so I venture to think it will be found that the policy on which the government of this country has entered with respect to the administration of lands in the Northwest Territories is equally unwise, and will have to be abandoned sooner or later with the result that complications will arise in respect of provincial subsidies and financial assistance which would not arise if the government had adopted the policy which has been adopted by the home government with respect to the public domain in Canada. What would have been the result in British North America long before this if the home administration, the imperial government had insisted upon retaining the public domain throughout the British possessions in North America and administering those lands, not for the benefit of the people of this country, but for the benefit of the empire at large? Could any one realize what the result would have been? Can any one at this moment, looking back over the history of this country for the past 50 or 60 years, have any doubt as to what the result would have been? It seems to me that the same reason, to a certain degree at least, exists for giving the control and administration of these lands to the people in the provinces and I for one have in conclusion to express my regret that the government have not seen fit to adopt that policy.

Mr. OLIVER. This question has been gone over already in the House since the Bill came up, and I do not know that anything new requiring special attention has been brought before the House on this occasion. The contention as I understand it is that the province is the better authority for the administration of the land. That contention has already been placed before the House and in opposition to it has been placed the contention that the Dominion is the better authority for controlling these lands. There is no question involved as to the respective business ability of the people of the Territories and of the Dominion. There is no question as to the respective honesty of administration on the part of the territorial or provincial government as compared with that of the Dominion. I presume there are honest men in the Territories as well as in other parts of the Dominion and that the honest men are fairly represented in the territorial or provincial governments.