

will succeed in persuading the House that it is right that the 3,000 people scattered over that plain should not have representation, well then I am ready to give in to him, but that is not his contention. His proposition is simply to absorb them elsewhere, into the adjacent constituencies. That is not my idea and I do not think it is an idea of fair-play either. I think these people who have populated that vast territory west of the Saskatchewan should have a representative by themselves, and I think when we come to discuss that we will impress the fairness of that even on the hon. gentleman himself.

Mr. SAM HUGHES. How far does the settlement extend west?

Mr. OLIVER. There are people on the summit of the Pass, on the Rocky Mountains.

Mr. SAM HUGHES. How many are there between the summit and the Saskatchewan River?

Mr. OLIVER. I tell the hon. member there are white people on the summit, 250 miles west.

Mr. SAM HUGHES. Two families, and the summit is in British Columbia.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Not one side of it.

Mr. AMES. I think the minister will find if he consults the record that almost the entire population of Stony Plain is found within 40 miles of Edmonton.

Mr. OLIVER. That is quite true but it does not account for the balance of the population.

At six o'clock, committee took recess.

After Recess.

Committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. BARKER. I understand the First Minister may be here presently, and I will proceed therefore with my remarks, as perhaps some other ministers present may be able to give the explanation I wished to obtain. I have listened with a great deal of attention to the remarks of the various speakers on the opposite side of the House with regard to this distribution of the seats in the proposed province of Alberta, and there is one point about which I have failed to see that any real explanation has been given. The proposed province contained, in last November, and no doubt contains today, and for a few years to come will contain, about 30,000 votes upon the list, in round numbers. There may be a few hundred more or a few hundred less, but about 30,000, according to all statements, is the number of voters upon the list. There are twenty-five seats, which will give an average or unit of about 1,200. Now, I observe

that in the distribution the government have arbitrarily, so far as I can see, certainly without any explanation so far being given, allotted two of the twenty-five seats to a portion of the province which contains no more than 500 votes, according to every calculation that one can make from the statements that have been given as to the probable population there. So that in that portion, the most northerly portion of the proposed province, 500 voters get two seats, or 250 to the seat, the average being 1,200. Now, I would like to have some distinct and clear explanation of how that comes about. It cannot have been accidental, there must have been discussions between some of those gentlemen, who are so active in representing the Northwest, and the government. We ought to know who suggested that, and why it was suggested. If you attempt to make such a distribution on the ground of an early increase of population, I would point out that it would be necessary, within the next two, or three, or four years, for the northerly portion, that portion which is in Athabaska, to increase 500 per cent to get up to the present position of the remainder of the province; it would have to increase 500 per cent while the remainder of the province was stationary. I think we ought to have some explanation of that anomaly. If, on the other hand, we ask, assuming it to be reasonable that 500 voters have two representatives in Athabaska, what should be the total number of seats for the province, the result would be that you would have to have 120 members in that province instead of 25. It is impossible that such a thing could have been proposed as appears upon this schedule without some discussion, and without some particular object of a selfish nature being at the bottom of it, and I say deliberately that there must have been a motive, an intention to accomplish some purpose.

I think that is a matter that deserves very serious consideration, and it is incumbent upon the government to explain that circumstance most fully. We have not heard any satisfactory explanation from the present Minister of the Interior. We all know the section he represents, and his personal interest—his political interest, rather—in creating such an anomaly, because it throws the balance of power of the whole province into the end of the province he represents. I think, therefore, for the very reason that this hon. gentleman has so recently been taken into the government, we should have a very explicit explanation upon that point. I did understand the hon. the Minister of the Interior to say: Oh, there is such an immense territory up there, and that territory requires representation apart from the very few people there. Well, it strikes me that is a very odd way of putting it. I could understand it if there were fractions to be provided for, if you were going to create one and a-half into