

the other provinces could withdraw their capital account?

Mr. SCOTT. I refer my hon. friend from Grey to his friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) who, when we discussed this matter, stated that one of the maritime provinces had withdrawn a portion of its capital and acted very foolishly in doing so. There is a very material divergence in these Bills from the confederation plan with regard to the land, but my opinion is that the people of the new provinces are quite content with that. I do not think I can quote any better authority on that point than Mr. Haultain, who in a formal letter to Sir Wilfrid Laurier stated he was quite willing to admit that the plan adopted in these Bills would work out more advantageously to the people of the provinces than had the actual confederation plan been followed. I hope I have said enough—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. SCOTT. I hope I have said enough to convince the House.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. SCOTT. My hon. friends opposite evidently think I have said enough, but they will have to hear more of this and some other questions out in the new provinces. I have no doubt that these gentlemen would be pleased indeed if these questions were never heard of again either here or anywhere in the Dominion of Canada. Have I left anything to be said? I trust that I have been able to put the case in a way to prove that this is no light matter—that it is no immaterial limitation upon Northwest autonomy that is at issue—that a real and substantial matter of provincial rights is involved. I trust that I have left no room for doubt as to my own position. On last 3rd November, in last January, on the 3rd of May when I voted for the general principle of autonomy and for the principles bound up in the main details of the measures, I deemed myself in honour bound, and at this moment I deem myself in honour bound, to oppose any autonomy scheme which will leave the Northwest provinces for ever under these exemptions. As a whole, I believe the Bills provide not only fair but generous terms. On that account, and further because of the other vexed and complicating difficulties which have arisen and which would almost necessarily have led to a contrary vote by me being misconstrued, I have not deemed it fair nor right to oppose the Bills nor to withdraw my support from the Prime Minister on the measures. But in view of the position which I held on this question before my electors, I have open to me only one alternative. If the government and the House can see their way clear to adopt my amendment, I shall have redeemed the pledge upon which I accepted election in West Assiniboia. I therefore beg to move, seconded by Mr. Talbot, of Stratheona:

Mr. SPROULE.

That the words after 'Now' be left out, and the following substituted: 'That the Bill (No. 69) be referred back to the Committee of the Whole House, with instruction to add to Section 23 the following sub-section:

Provided that the foregoing shall not prejudice the right of the parliament of Canada, by expropriation or otherwise, to obtain the relinquishment by the said company of the company's rights under section 16 of the contract aforesaid.

* Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Mr. Speaker, I regret, as much as my hon. friend himself who has spoken with a good deal of warmth on this subject, the necessity under which the government has found itself impelled to introduce the section in the Bill to which he has taken such strong exception. My hon. friend is aware, and the House is aware also, that the party to which he and I belong did everything we could to prevent parliament from accepting that clause of the Canadian Pacific Railway contract when it was submitted to parliament in the year 1881. Unfortunately the efforts we made at that time were unavailing; parliament thought differently. That parliament made a mistake on that occasion I do not think is susceptible now of any discussion. However, even though parliament did make a mistake on that occasion, it is a rule which has never been violated, and which my hon. friend himself admits, that, even under such a sense of mistake which would be shared by the parliament of this day, there is nothing to do but to abide loyally by what has been done; and I understand that my hon. friend himself does not propose that parliament at this juncture should with a rough hand attempt to repudiate the engagement which was entered into in 1881. His amendment does not go that length, nor did he imply in his argument that we should attempt to give to the new provinces which we are now creating the power of taxing the property of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, in face of the exception which was made in its favour when the contract was entered into in 1881. The only amendment which my hon. friend wants to have made is a declaration to the effect that this clause which we insert in the Bill giving effect to the exemption contained in the Act respecting the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, 'shall not prejudice the right of the parliament of Canada, by expropriation or otherwise, to obtain the relinquishment by the said company of the company's rights under section 16 of the contract as aforesaid.' The only answer I have to make to my hon. friend on this point is that the government do not think it advisable to complicate this Bill further than it is at present by the unfortunate necessity of inserting in the Bill the section which he wants thus amended. The parliament of Canada made a solemn contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, and this contract cannot be done away with except in one of two