

there are in the American Union states of unequal sizes. It is not a fatal fault as has been proved by the history of the American Union, but I believe that when provinces are not the result of historic tradition, when they have not come to us formed and when we have the control of events, it is preferable that the provinces should be as near as possible about the same size. Therefore, it is impossible to suppose that this immense territory of 1,112,527 miles should be formed into one single province. There is another objection. The territories are naturally divided into two portions from the point of view of agriculture, climate, and productions generally, the northern portion and the southern portion, and I would place the boundary of these two sections a little south of the boundary which now divides the provisional district of Mackenzie from the provisional district of Athabaska. This northern portion of the continent has not yet been fully explored, but still we know enough of it, there has been enough exploration of it and it has been travelled over sufficiently, to make us sure that it is absolutely unfit for agriculture. The climate is too cold and the soil is too poor. There are, however, very excellent and very promising indications of mineral wealth in that district. There are indications to-day of petroleum, coal, gold, copper and other minerals, and perhaps some day we may have in what is to-day a barren section, another Yukon. But we know by the experience of the past that mineral wealth, when not coupled with agriculture, is but a precarious ground on which to found the hope of thick and permanent settlement. Therefore, we put aside this northern section; but the southern section is of an absolutely different character.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What does the right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) refer to exactly?

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Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I would divide the two sections at about the line which now divides the provisional district of Mackenzie and the provisional district of Athabaska, about the 60th parallel of north latitude.

The southern section is of a different character. It is absolutely an agricultural country, and I need not say that it is one of the finest in the world to-day. It is traversed by large rivers flowing from the Rocky mountains to Hudson's bay, and the valley of the Saskatchewan is, as every one knows, equal in fertility to the valley of the Red river. Everybody knows also that the valley of the Red river and the valley of the Saskatchewan are to-day the most fertile wheat fields under the sun. We propose to give autonomy, not to the whole of the Territories, but to that section which extends from the American

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

boundary up to the boundary line between the provisional district of Mackenzie and the provisional district of Athabaska, that is the 60th parallel of north latitude.

When we were first approached on this subject, it was proposed to us that we should make a province extending from the American boundary up to the 57th parallel, that is to say, somewhat to the south of the provisional boundary between the provisional districts of Mackenzie and Athabaska, but we thought it preferable to take in the whole district of Athabaska. The reason for this is, that although Athabaska is not considered to be a fertile country, and the eastern portion of it is barren, the western portion, the valley of the Peace river, is equal to the valley of the Saskatchewan and settlement there is already proceeding rapidly. There are to-day on the Peace river two grist mills, provided absolutely from wheat grown in the Peace river valley, and therefore we have decided to include within the new provinces the provisional district of Athabaska. The area of these two provinces together will be about 550,345 square miles. This is, in our estimation, altogether too large an area to be made into one single province according to the size of the other provinces, the largest of which is British Columbia, and the next largest Quebec, British Columbia with an area of 372,000 square miles and Quebec with an area of 351,000 square miles. By dividing it into two you have two provinces of 275,000 square miles in round numbers, each about the size of the province of Ontario. If any of the members of the House will care to look at the map, they will see that we have put the provisional boundary on the fourth meridian and according to our present information, this will give about the same area and also the same population to the two provinces. It is estimated that the population to-day in these two provinces is about 500,000 souls. We have no accurate data, but we can proceed pretty confidently upon this information. The census in 1901 gave to these Northwest Territories a population of a little over 160,000 souls. Since that time, during the seasons of 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1904, the population, by immigration alone, has increased by over 100,000 a year, so that to-day we feel we are on pretty safe ground when we say that there is in those two provinces a total population of 500,000 souls, and we calculate that this population is about equally divided between the two provinces, giving a population of 250,000 to each.

Since I am upon the question of boundaries I shall also come to another question, connected therewith, that is to say, the demand which has been made upon us by the province of Manitoba for an extension of its boundaries, westward, northward and eastward. Yesterday a morning paper in this city published an interview given by the Hon. Mr. Rogers, a member of the govern-