

a statement on the subject, or he will bring down the papers at an early day. He has been looking into the matter since the former discussion.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTHWEST.

House in committee on Bill (No. 69) to establish and provide for the government of the province of Alberta.—Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

On section 12,—distribution of seats—

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Chairman, do I understand that there is to be no reply at all to the statements which were made by members last night? Has the government concluded to keep silence?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I understood, Mr. Chairman, that we adjourned yesterday because of the request of the hon. member for Lanark (Mr. Haggart) who intimated that several hon. gentlemen intended to speak upon the question.

Mr. FOSTER. Yes.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. We waited to see what further arguments would be advanced before making a reply.

Mr. FOSTER. Does my right hon. friend think nothing has been brought up by my two hon. friends who spoke yesterday afternoon, my hon. friend from Calgary (Mr. McCarthy) and my hon. friend from Montreal, St. Antoine (Mr. Ames), which requires an answer?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I think that anything that has been brought up can be met very successfully, but we thought that more arguments were coming from the other side and that we would wait and hear these arguments.

Mr. FOSTER. With all deference to my right hon. friend, I think it would tax himself and perhaps some of his supporters to answer what has already been given, and it might make it altogether too burdensome if others were to speak on this matter before the arguments which have already been advanced have been answered.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I do not agree with my hon. friend on that. I do not think any argument has been advanced which will require any great effort to answer.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. It was not my privilege to hear the very eloquent explanations which appear to have been given yesterday, but I have glanced over 'Hansard' and I fail to find that very lucid explanation that one would naturally expect in relation to the establishment of Peace River and Athabaska. I cannot say that I have been convinced by anything that was brought forward in the House yesterday.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. We do not expect to be able to do that.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I cannot say that I think my right hon. friend the Prime Minister is convinced and I am sure my hon. friend the Minister of Justice is not convinced by the arguments advanced in reference to Peace River and Athabaska. I would be very pleased, if the hon. Minister of the Interior has any additional data, to hear him.

Mr. FOSTER. Well, if there is none I have other questions to ask. In the first place, there were three different statements given as to the population of Athabaska and Peace River. Although this is a small matter and in the opinion of my right hon. friend is not worth while taking notice of probably, yet I think that when two ministers of the Crown and two lay members of the House make statements in reference to the population all which differ from each other we ought to have an authoritative statement. Is the minister able to give us an authoritative statement as to the white, the half-breed and the Indian population of the Peace river?

Mr. OLIVER. I expect that information from the Census Department shortly and I will present it to the House.

Mr. FOSTER. That is an instructive comment. This Bill has been before the House for two or three months, and when we come to ask the most elementary question with reference to two constituencies, the minister tells us that up to the present time he has not the information.

Mr. OLIVER. I said no such thing. Yesterday I gave the information from the Census Bureau with regard to this matter; the hon. gentleman questioned the information I gave; I sent it to the Census Department to have it verified, and as soon as I get the benefit of the verification he will have it.

Mr. FOSTER. Is the House to be delayed now because the minister has not been diligent enough to get the information which presumably he could get in an hour's time if he asked for it?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. My hon. friend (Mr. Foster) is trying to magnify a very simple little difficulty. Yesterday the population of Athabaska was given as follows: Peace River, 1,724; Athabaska, 1,676.

Mr. FOSTER. What are those?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. As I understood whites and half-breeds, exclusive of Indians. These figures were questioned and immediately the Minister of the Interior gave orders to have them verified, as there was a discrepancy between them and the figures quoted by the hon. member for Argenteuil (Mr. Perley). It has not been possible to have the information returned yet.