

The hon. member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) seemed to fear greatly that if the control of the public domain should be given to the provinces, the provinces would use the lands for revenue and would not settle the outlying districts. Well, Sir, I am not so willing as he is to suspect the foresight and business-like management of the local assembly. That assembly has undertaken no function up to date that the people of that country would consent to have abrogated, and the enlargements heretofore made in the powers of the local assembly have been amply justified by the results. The hon. member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) also entertained a different view of this question in days gone by, and on the 24th of July, 1884, he moved in the local legislature a resolution which expressed his views at that date, and which are not his views of to-day. He tells us that the lands might be exploited by the people of the west, but let me ask him if the people of the west are not the most interested in the proper administration of these lands, and do they not realize that by settling these lands they would be enhancing the value of their heritage. For my part, Sir, I am not prepared to say that if the immigration policy were handed over to the local government, they would continue the present system in its entirety. I do not know that a large expenditure out of the immigration vote for campaign literature would be carried on; I do not know that the large army of officials now in the Northwest would be continued in office, and I do not know that the local government would hand over its lands in blocks of 250,000 acres at one dollar an acre.

We are told now, Sir, and it is common report throughout the country, that the duties of the Department of the Interior have become too onerous for one man. We were told that the ex-minister (Mr. Sifton) was so broken down in health that he of all men was unable to attend the conference with regard to the granting of autonomy to the Territories. Is not this a very good opportunity to relieve the Department of the Interior of some of its work, and of handing over to the local administration of the Territories the control of the public lands, a right which is enjoyed by every other province but one in this Dominion?

All that we have heard from the ex-Minister of the Interior is that there would be a conflict; but that will not satisfy the people of the west. They want some more satisfactory reason, in view of the attitude which the hon. gentleman assumed in days gone by. They will not endure in silence the withholding of their public lands. I doubt if some of the other Liberal members, in view of the statements which they have made in days gone by, will get up in this House and make the declaration that the people of the Northwest Territories are

not fit to be entrusted with the same measure of self-government that is enjoyed by the various provinces of this Dominion. If they do, I think we on this side of the House will have some reason to congratulate ourselves on the manner in which they will be received by the people of that country after such a declaration. In view of the statements that have been made, I think it is only fair to this House and to the people of that country that these hon. gentlemen should give the grounds for the conclusions at which they have arrived.

The hon. the Solicitor General was very pleased to exalt and extol the British constitution. He thought very much of the British constitution in certain respects; but if the British constitution applies in one direction, why should it not apply in the other? If we are going to follow the British constitution in respect of education, why should we depart from it in regard to the important matter of the control of the public domain? Are hon. gentlemen opposite, in withholding from the new provinces the control of the public domain, following the British colonial policy? What was that policy? It is perhaps unnecessary for me to state to the House that the original idea of the British statesmen was to control the lands in the colonies; but when they tried to put that idea into practice, they had to abandon it for a better policy, namely, that the people on the spot were best qualified to manage their own lands, and that was the policy they adopted. They felt that with local representation the management of the lands would be better looked after. Is that principle not equally applicable to-day? Here we have a territory two thousand miles away, represented in this House by only ten members. If those lands are handed over to the local government, there will be fifty members looking after their management in the interest of the people; and if mistakes or jobbery are liable to happen, are these not more likely to be detected by governments representing fifty members than by a government representing only ten? I say that to withhold from the provinces the management of their own lands is directly contrary, not only to British colonial policy, but to the spirit of confederation. When confederation was formed, what was the arrangement made between the various provinces? Was it not that each province retained the right to administer the public domain, while the customs and excise duties were surrendered to the Dominion? That was the policy carried out with regard to Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Then, in what spirit are these provinces being created to-day? I take it that it is under section 146 of the British North America Act, which especially provides that the admission shall be 'subject to the provisions of this Act.' The spirit is also in section 109, if the letter is not, un-