

Mr. OLIVER. The hon. gentleman (Mr. R. L. Borden) reminds me of a Scotchman who said he was quite open to conviction, but he would like to see the man who could convince him. If hon. gentlemen opposite will permit me to state what seems to me to be the position of the opposition, for the purpose of stating what seems to me to be the position of this side of the House, I can make my argument clearer. It seems to me that the trend of the argument on the other side up to the present time is that the test of representation should be population.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The main test—no doubt.

Mr. OLIVER. That and that alone. Now, if I understand the position of this side, it is that the population is one basis, but besides there should be considered also other elements—area, prospects and possibilities, community of interest. And we point to the example of every distribution of seats in every province of the Dominion ever since there was a Dominion. We say that our policy is that which has governed every party in every province, in every distribution. If that does not convince hon. gentlemen opposite that we are in the right, we simply fail to convince them, and there is no need to prolong the argument. If we, with the whole history of the country on our side cannot convince them, they can hardly hope to convince us. I have no hesitation in saying that their proposal, if carried into effect would result in the gravest difficulty. My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) smiles. He doubts what I say. He has an amendment which he proposes to move setting forth his view of the proper distribution of these constituencies. If I have read that amendment correctly, he proposes to give to the Dominion electoral district of Alberta 5 local seats; to Calgary, 6; to Strathcona, 6; to Edmonton, 6. If I read the figures aright, that means that 686 voters in the district of Alberta will be entitled to a representative in the local assembly, according to his proposal, while in the district of Strathcona, 966 voters would be entitled to one representative.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not think it works out that way.

Mr. OLIVER. I think my calculation, if incorrect, is incorrect only in small degree. The hon. gentleman has argued, on the occasions when he has stated his position before the House—and never more persistently and determinedly than within the last five minutes—that the basis of representation should be equality of population. Yet, in the very proposition he has placed before the House he has departed from that principle to the extent of 50 per cent. I find no fault with his proposition on that account, but simply with the argument; and I am trying to show how absurd is his argument of population that it should be the sole basis of representation. He proposes to govern the

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

new constituencies of the province by the present Dominion constituencies. That may be a perfectly proper basis of division. I do not think it is, as a matter of fact. I say it is a very improper one. But, let us assume, for the sake of argument, that it is a proper division. In making that division he gives an advantage of 50 per cent to one part of the country over another. Does he say that the people in one part of the country are more intelligent, or that a larger proportion of them are voters? He has been careful, in speaking of the district of Athabaska to take my estimate of 5,000 whites and half-breeds but to omit the 1,500 Indians who went to make up my total estimate of 6,500 for that district. But, take the district of Alberta to which he proposes to give 5 members. Out of a total population in the district of Macleod, according to the census, there are 1,738 Indians. If the hon. gentleman finds the proposal we make does not absolutely accord with rule and line and plummet, I would call his careful attention to his own proposal to see how nearly he has met the condition he himself has laid down.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. So far as voters on the list are concerned, Alberta, according to the figures has 5,147 or about 1,000 voters for each member proposed to be given to that district.

Mr. OLIVER. Then, my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) refuses to accept any other standard than the voters' list?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I have said that a dozen times—that the voters on the list were a much better guide to population than the number of votes cast. I should think that so obvious that it would be hardly necessary to repeat it a dozen times. A greater proportion of voters may go to the polls in one constituency than in another. The difference may be due to a dozen different reasons. The weather, the nature of the issue, the organization of the party, the popularity of the candidate, the keenness of the contest—a hundred things affect the percentage of voters who go to the polls. Therefore it seems to me clear that the number on the list is a much safer guide to the population than the number who actually go to the polls.

Mr. BARKER. Let me ask the minister another question. Supposing in two or three constituencies there was no contest at all, what would he do if he were to rely upon the lists? Would he say there were no voters if there was no contest?

Mr. OLIVER. That is what my hon. friends have been saying with regard to the district of Athabaska. But I would like, for the information of my hon. friend, to give him a fact in regard to the method in which voters' lists are prepared in the Northwest Territories, and the purpose which they have in view. The very fact which was brought out recently by my hon. friend from Strath-