

River are traversed by two great rivers; they contain possibilities of equal value to the possibilities of more than equal areas in other provinces in this Dominion; they have a present population and they have a valuable trade; it is in the interest not only of these districts but of this whole Dominion that the methods of civilized government should prevail throughout the length and breadth of these provinces; and the only means that we recognize for the application of the forms of civilized government in this country is adequate representation. That is all that we ask at the hands of this House, and we ask it, not as a matter of judicial decision, but as a question of public policy, upon which we are prepared to take issue with our friends on the other side of the House.

Mr. FOSTER. I do not understand that it is proposed to have the commission of judges decide as to what parts of the country shall or shall not be represented. Their duty is a duty of delimitation based upon the decision of this parliament as to what country shall be represented.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. My hon. friend is in error. The amendment moved by the hon. member for Calgary makes no such distinction. It proposes to refer everything to the judges. Here it is:

That section 12 be struck out, and that the following be substituted therefor:

Until the said legislature otherwise provides, the legislative assembly shall be composed of twenty-five members, to be elected to represent the electoral divisions hereinafter mentioned.

Such division shall be made by a board of commissioners, &c.

Mr. FOSTER. Does my right hon. friend mean to say that it proposes that the judges shall mark the boundaries of the province of Alberta?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Not the boundaries of the province, because that is done by parliament.

Mr. FOSTER. If then the boundaries of the province are marked by parliament, what the judges would have to do would be to delimit the area so bounded into twenty-five constituencies.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. And they would say whether the present district of Athabaska should be represented or not—whether it should be annexed to a neighbouring constituency or have representation of its own. I say this is not a question to be determined by the judges. It is a question to be determined by parliament.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Has any one in the House suggested that the northern regions should not be represented? I have not heard it.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I heard it not later than yesterday evening—that they

should not have representation by themselves.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Ah!

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That is a question which should be determined here. It is essentially, as my hon. friend the Minister of the Interior says, a question of high politics, the highest kind of politics. The question whether these matters should be determined by parliament or by the judges is never a question in England. My hon. friend refers to the policy of the Liberal party in Great Britain. It is always pleasant to hear my hon. friend talking of Liberal principles and never applying them paying them the tribute of empty compliments and nothing more. In England the duty of delimitation is not assigned to judges, but to a board of commissioners, and they are restricted to the duty of delimitation. They have to consult old charters to ascertain the limits of towns, boroughs, and so on, which we have not to do here. What we have to determine is what should be the basis of representation and how it should be applied. I must say that I am a little disappointed at the conduct of my hon. friends on the other side of the House. When two months ago we gave them the actual numbers of the constituencies and the manner in which we intended to divide the province, I expected that if they had any objection to the division, they would offer a counter proposition. But nothing of the kind has taken place. If they had come with their list of constituencies, we might have seen how far we could agree, and then there might have been something to refer to the judges. But nothing of the kind has taken place. Our proposition has been met with a naked negative and nothing else—with the statement that our distribution as between the south and the north is not fair. That is the only point our hon. friends on the other side of the House make. Have you heard a complaint that any of these constituencies are unfair, or that there is any attempt at what is known as a gerrymander? You have not heard anything of the kind. The only point made up to the present time, after twenty-four hours of discussion, is that our distribution is not fair to the south, that it is in favour of the north. My hon. friend from North Toronto argued a moment ago that we had not any basis of representation, although we have shown that we have taken as a basis all the records that are at our disposal—the population as given by the census, the recorded vote and the registered vote, and to these we have added the number of post offices. My hon. friend says there is no argument in the number of post offices. He says that in the town of Calgary there is one post office and in Stony Plain one post office, and that the former has an urban population of some magnitude while the latter is an insignifi-