

there was no acceptance of what he had in his mind.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I did not intend to convey the idea that I thought that this matter should be settled between the opposition and the government sitting as we are now at this table, but I thought this was a matter which might well be settled by the members who were representing the Northwest Territories. I am sorry it was not done in that way. If it were not done in that way we might have done it in one of two other ways. One way was to refer it to a commission of judges as the hon. leader of the opposition and the hon. member for Calgary have proposed. My hon. friend has referred to the precedent, as he calls it, of the Bill of 1899. The Bill of 1899 was introduced for a specific object only and for nothing else; that is to say, to rectify certain things which the party on this side of the House thought had been done injuriously to them. It was proposed that certain counties should be divided and others united and the Bill proposed that when there was to be a division of a county into two or more ridings the work should be done by a commission, but at no time was it the policy of the party to which I belong that we should entrust the work of preparing the constituencies in this House, because we had only to deal with this House, to a commission of judges. We thought that, on the contrary, we should deal with that matter in accordance with British precedent and that we should have the work done by the House itself and not delegated to any judiciary authority. My hon. friend stated to the House that according to British precedent this work should be referred to judges, but I beg to say that in this matter he is in error. At no time in Great Britain, as far as my information goes, and I think upon this point it is absolutely accurate, and under no circumstances in Great Britain has the work of distribution of seats in the House of Commons been referred to a commission of judges. The work has been done in every instance by the House itself reserving only the mechanical work of tracing upon the ground and putting on the maps the respective divisions to which the House has agreed, not to a commission of judges, but to a special board. That was what was done in 1884 and I understand it is what has been done subsequently. Prior to 1884 this work of redistribution had always been done more or less arbitrarily, but in 1884, when the Act of Representation was introduced by Mr. Gladstone, which was largely to add to the electorate and which was to extend the franchise chiefly in cities, the opposition, led by Lord Salisbury, would not agree to the Act unless they knew beforehand what distribution should be made in consequence of it. Mr. Gladstone agreed to the suggestion. The question was one which was not without some difficulties. As the franchise was to be largely extended, chiefly in the boroughs, and as the representation would be larger in

the boroughs than in the counties, the question was to have a fair distribution in consequence. I gather from the debates that the Conservative party were afraid that if the basis of the suffrage were largely extended, and if there was a large acquisition of votes upon the lists, the boroughs might go against the Conservatives to the prejudice of the representation of the counties in which their strength lay. The chief object was to have a fair distribution, before even agreeing to the principle of the extension of the suffrage. Mr. Gladstone agreed to that, and the principles were laid down and discussed at a conference between representatives of both political parties.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Were not these principles embodied in a commission issued to judges?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. No. The commission was entrusted to a board of commissioners, the names of whom I will quote from the record. I read from the speech of Mr. Gladstone, English 'Hansard,' volume 294:

The best thing I can say is that a commission has been appointed for the purpose. The division of the boroughs and the fixing of the county districts will be under a commission which has been appointed, and perhaps I might not do ill—since, after all, confidence in the commission is a very important matter—if I ventured to read the names of the commissioners to the House. For England the names are Sir John Lambert, Mr. Pelham, barrister-at-law, Sir Francis Sanford, Mr. Joseph John Henley, the son of a former well-known member of this House, Colonel Owen Jones, and Major Hector Tulloch.

I have here the instructions that were given to the commissioners, and it will be found that the work of the commission was largely to be the mechanical laying out of the boundaries upon the ground. They had to divide counties and boroughs; and in England, where the population is thick, where the divisions are ill-defined and where the boundaries are sometimes the result, not of law, but of custom, the difficulty was to distribute the population so as to give a fair proportion as between boroughs and counties and between boroughs and boroughs and at the same time not to interfere too radically with existing conditions. I have here the instructions which were given to the commissioners, and I have the report made by these commissioners. The report is signed by the gentlemen whose names I have given, and it is prefaced with the instruction from which I quote:

The duties of the commissioners will be the following:

1. With respect to counties.

In the first place to examine the survey maps of the Ordnance Department, and determine from them and other documents in the possession of that department and of the local government board and from other available information, the boundaries to be assigned to the several divisions of each county to be divided. In