

is vested with the property of its lands. Such has been the case with Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and British Columbia. But one must remember that when they entered into confederation, each of these provinces had the property of its lands. They were independent colonies and they exercised a sovereign power over their Crown lands. Nearly all their revenues have since been derived from that source. Their right was inalienable and they stipulated in 1867, that they would continue to exercise it. Quite different in the case with the Northwest Territories. At the time of confederation, the delegates of the provinces inserted a clause in the British North America Act by which they empowered the Dominion to purchase from the Hudson Bay Company—then suzerain of the Territories—all this vast tract of country. The purchase was made in 1870, and the price paid by the Dominion to the Hudson Bay Company amounted to £300,000. Out of that domain, was first carved the province of Manitoba, but, with the exception of the swamp lands, all the public lands of the new province remained the property of Canada.

Mr. MONK. Would my hon. friend (Mr. Lemieux) allow me to ask him a question? If the land in the Northwest remains vested in the Dominion, why was it necessary in the case of Manitoba to put a special provision in the Bill creating that province to reserve the lands of that province? It does not seem to have been necessary, according to the hon. gentleman's argument.

Mr. LEMIEUX. It was to avoid litigation. The province of Manitoba might have said: We must be treated as the other provinces have been treated; the other provinces have their public lands and we must have our public lands. Therefore there was a special enactment in the Act of 1870, that Manitoba should not have its lands but that these should remain vested in the Dominion.

We were told the other day by the right hon. leader of the House how Sir John Macdonald refused the request of Manitoba when in 1884 that province raised a claim to the property of her public lands. The same policy has been followed with regard to every new state entering the American union. It seems to me therefore that we would not have been justified to adopt a different policy with regard to the two new provinces. Their territory covers in round figures a total area of 345,000,000 acres—one-third of which has already been reserved or sold. We must deduct from that total area, the land grants made to railway companies by the Conservative administrations, the Indian reserves, the timber limits, the school lands, the Hudson bay lands, and the homesteads already taken, which leaves a balance of about 225,000,000 acres. Sir,

Mr. LEMIEUX.

I claim that this domain is the property of the whole Dominion of Canada. Administered by Canada since 1870, it has added not a little burden to the public exchequer. We had to pay the cost of two rebellions and besides, we have—in order to maintain law, peace and order—equipped a corps of mounted police, which has patrolled the west and afforded ample protection against the Indians and the rough element. Again, the Dominion has spent millions to advertise and settle the west. We have subsidized the vast system of railways which is now netting so rapidly the prairies from north to south, from east to west. The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Grand Trunk Pacific are in a sense national highways, but who will deny that the Northwest Territories are not the most interested in their completion?

All this vast expenditure has enhanced the value of the Northwest Territories and the Dominion has yet to draw the interest to which any creditor is entitled on an investment. Would it be fair, Mr. Speaker, to divest ourselves of our lands, under such circumstances? Would not that policy be inopportune and unwise?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. My hon. friend will of course remember, and he will pardon me for interrupting, that this is exactly the argument which was made fifty or sixty or seventy years ago in Great Britain as a reason for not handing over to the people of the various provinces the control of their lands and their minerals.

Mr. LEMIEUX. Yes, it is always well to borrow from Great Britain. Sir, I have read some very wild statements in the press, concerning this question of public lands. Having myself been a journalist; far be it from my mind to minimize the influence of the press—but it thus happens that sometimes the press finds grievances which are more imaginary than real. Some people have that weakness;—they are happy—yet a grievance heretofore unsuspected comes to them as a relief. Let me, Mr. Speaker, answer some of the statements made in favour of entrusting the lands to the new provinces. First, it must be admitted that a revenue had to be provided to run the machinery of the local government. This is what is being done by granting a subsidy in lieu of lands. Is this subsidy a fair equivalent for the public lands surrendered to us? In order to answer this question, one must bear in mind the following facts. The lands are not sold by the federal government, but are given away as an inducement to the settlers. Suppose the lands were left to the new provinces, would they depart from the policy of free grants to the settlers? I assume that they would—in all wisdom—continue the issuing of free grants. Thus, the revenue which otherwise would accrue from the sale of these