

provinces ought to be considered and dealt with at one and the same time. We are desirous of dealing with this question in a reasonable way, but it did not seem to me that the proposal put forward to us in December last by the three Prime Ministers of the prairie provinces was one that they really expected us to entertain.

5 p.m. I assume that they put it forward more especially as a basis for further negotiations. At all events, at the moment I have only this to say, that up to the present time those negotiations have had no further results.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Mr. Speaker, some of the chickens of my right hon. friend are coming home to roost and he finds it very difficult to find a place for those troublesome birds.

Mr. BORDEN: There is one of my right hon. friend's here.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I will deal with that also, but let us discuss one thing at a time. In order to get at the origin of this trouble, we have to go back as far as the year 1905, when we introduced and carried the Bill for the creation of the two new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. At that time there arose between the Opposition and the Government of that day, or rather between the Liberal party sitting on that side of the House and the Conservative party sitting on this side, a cleavage as to the disposition of public lands in those provinces. We took the ground, for reasons stated, to which I shall allude later on, that those lands should continue to be owned and administered by the Dominion, whereas my right hon. friend the then leader of the Opposition and his whole party claimed that they should be handed over to the provinces. Indeed, he took very strong ground upon that question; he spoke very strongly and even violently; he made the question an issue in the election of 1911. During the recess which took place on account of my absence in England while attending the Imperial Conference and the Coronation of His Majesty, he toured the provinces of the West and stated, in language as emphatic as he could make it, that if the Conservative party were returned to office, those lands would be handed over to the provinces; that the men of the provinces were free men; that it was therefore their right to have the administration of those lands, which properly belonged to them. There

was no restriction then; there was no rider attached to the disposition of those lands.

Mr. MACDONALD: No Maritime provinces then.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: They were the property of free men and those free men had the right to those free lands. But my right hon. friend has been two years in office and those free men are still waiting for their free lands. When my right hon. friend is questioned by my hon. friend from Medicine Hat as to what he intends to do in regard to the implementing of that promise, he is told by my right hon. friend: How impudent you are; what a change of heart you have had; at one time you were in favour of these lands being retained by the Dominion. But my right hon. friend forgets that, if my hon. friend from Medicine Hat has had a change of heart, he himself has also had a change of heart.

Mr. BORDEN: My heart is where it was before.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: He has had a change of heart from what it was in 1905, when in the prairie provinces he pledged himself by everything that was sacred that when the Conservative party came to its own, the free men of the West would have the administration of those free lands.

Sir, the answer which the right hon. gentleman has given to my hon. friend from Medicine Hat, is such an answer as he often gives and in which he seems to take the greatest satisfaction. It is in effect: Well, I am not better than you were; true, I found fault with you and said you were wrong, but my justification for doing now that which I found fault with you for doing is that you have no right to find fault with me, being no better than I, and besides,—well, 'I am here and you are there.'

But let us come to the broader aspect of this question. There is more than my right hon. friend imagines in the point he has attempted to make that the other provinces have to be taken into account in this matter. Let us go back to the Act of 1905. At that time I put it clearly before the House that the best policy for the Dominion to adopt was to retain these lands in the control of the Dominion and not hand them over to the provinces. I based myself on the precedent given in the creation of Manitoba; I fortified myself with the language of Sir John Macdonald, the man who is eulogized by Conservatives everywhere, but whose teachings they neglect every day of their life. Speaking on this