

securing an amendment of the Imperial Act which left the way open for this province to continue its agitation for better terms, notwithstanding the attitude of the Parliament at Ottawa, which agreed to the payment to this province of the \$100,000 a year for a period of ten years and provided that when the last payment should have been made our case would be regarded as closed, and we should have no further opportunity to advance evidence in support of our case, already admitted to be one worthy of consideration.

#### What the Words "Final and Unalterable" Meant.

"So determined was the then Finance Minister of the Dominion, Mr. Fielding, and his chief, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, that the doors should be closed against British Columbia securing justice that they even went so far as to incorporate in the act language strange indeed to anyone acquainted with parliamentary procedure. The words set down were "final and unalterable." So far as Ottawa was concerned, there was no desire or intention that we should have opportunity to present our claim, no matter upon how sound a foundation of right and justice it might rest. My own course at London had been closely followed by the Federal authorities. Sir Wilfrid Laurier was himself in London at the time, and took opportunity to present his views to the Imperial Government, and they did not hesitate to insist that this paltry million was to be taken as payment of all claims the province might have against the Dominion of Canada.

"For my part, I was insistent that the Parliament at Ottawa had no right to take that stand—that it was not competent for them to say that these questions were settled until we were in agreement. It would not have been conceivable for the authorities at London, in fairness, to have said that we should be put in a position wherein we could not follow up the argument which during so many years we had been steadily and consistently putting forward. The compact of Confederation was practically a treaty, and when it was proposed to make any alteration, it must be

with the consent of the high contracting parties.

"Mr. Winston Churchill was then Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, and he laid down the rule that it was not permissible for the authorities at Ottawa to practically dictate the business of the several provinces or frame up an arrangement that was not in accord with the views of the interested provinces. The action of the Imperial Government was to leave the way open for the province to still further press its legitimate claims, and this Legislature, on the 7th March, 1906, reaffirmed its position.

#### Recent Negotiations at Ottawa.

The recent mission, to Ottawa, of which the report is now before the House, is a complete vindication of the position consistently maintained by this province, we having been granted what we so long have asked for—a commission empowered to examine fully into the claims of British Columbia. The various debates on the subject which have taken place in this Legislature, and the entire history of these negotiations, will bear me out when I say again today, as I have said time and again in sessions gone by, that this Provincial Government has always been desirous of approaching this question in a non-political way. We have never sought to make party or political capital out of it, but merely to press home at Ottawa with all fairness and as strongly as possible what we regard as our legitimate rights. Nothing was done by us to embarrass Sir Wilfrid Laurier or his Government until he and they refused to meet us in the fair way in which we were entitled to be met. If we had attempted to make this a party question our course would immediately have been challenged, and we should have lost ground immeasurably. But until we were treated in the manner the Dominion Government proposed to treat us in 1907, there was no politics in our presentation of this question—we were merely striving to get for British Columbia what we contended she was rightfully entitled to. When Sir Wilfrid took the stand that he did, he left us no