

tions in the matter, that I now come before you. It is a fact that the only paper in this city has misrepresented the Government's actions, and the facts of the case in every way, and this I shall endeavor to prove. The Vancouver morning paper is similarly misrepresenting things. I shall speak deliberately and lay before you

Facts and Figures

in such a way that they can be taken down and published. An effort has been made to spread abroad the belief that the Government wishes to rule this country with a policy of rank injustice. That, upon the face of it, is a proposition which must condemn itself in the mind of every reasonable person. Anyone would be simply insane to want to govern a country with a policy of injustice towards a portion of it, and if it is shown to me that I cannot administer the affairs of this country in a way acceptable to the right-thinking men of the community, by doing justice to all sections, I do not wish to hold the reins of power a single day. [Applause.] Let us take as a text the petition which is being gotten up to the Governor-General. I will give it consideration for the time being, which is more than this document will get when it reaches the hands of those for whom it is intended. The people to whom this document is addressed are bound to admit the principles of responsible government. As you make your bed, so must you lie. You remember a few months ago there was an agitation in Nova Scotia regarding the coal deal there, on account of what was said to be the Government giving away large properties to the United States. The Governor General was applied to; but was there anything done? No; they were told the Legislature was autonomous; and that will be the answer which will be given to this petition when it reaches Ottawa. Therefore, I say—and truthfully, too—that I am about to give this document more consideration than it will get when it reaches the hands of those to whom it is addressed. The petition says:

"That, owing to the rapid increase in the population of certain parts of British Columbia since the opening of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Legislative Assembly of the Province has not been for many years representative of the people of the Province; that the said Assembly is non-representative to an extent entirely subversive of the principle of responsible government, as the subjoined statements from the returns of the last general election will show: The Mainland, with 9,025 registered voters, returned 17 members. The Island, with 6,535 registered voters, returned 16 members. The Province is divided into 18 constituencies, with a total registered vote of 15,560. Of these voters, 12,691 are registered in seven constituencies, which elect 16 members, and the remaining 2,869 voters are registered in 11 constituencies, which elect 17 members. At the last general election the seven constituencies registering 12,691 voters returned only four members as supporters of the Government, while 11 small constituencies, having 2,869 voters, returned 16 Government supporters; and one of the four Government supporters elected by a large constituency having resigned before the meeting of the House, his place was supplied by an opponent of the Government. At a meeting of the House, therefore, we had (giving each member his proportion of

the votes registered in his constituency) 19 members who were supporters of the Government, representing 4,576 registered voters; 14 members who were not supporters of the Government, representing 10,984 registered voters.

"And the petition of the undersigned further sheweth that at various times before and since the last general election, and particularly in the speech of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor at the opening of the House in January last, a measure providing for a just redistribution of representation has been promised, the words of His Honor's speech being: 'The time has arrived when the altered conditions of the Province demand a change in the method of popular representation in the Legislative Assembly, and a measure of redistribution will, therefore, be submitted to you.' That this often-repeated promise has not been fulfilled."

Now, it is said that the Government has deliberately broken faith with the community in this matter. Fortunately, what has been said by the present Government and other Governments is upon record, and can be referred to by anybody. In April, 1890, as many of you will remember, a deputation waited upon the Government at Victoria during the session of the House and pressed their views in the matter of redistribution. The Government of the day candidly discussed the subject in all its bearings. I will read you some few extracts of what was said and what was understood to be done at that meeting:

Mr. T. Dunn—Is it the intention of the Government, when the census is taken, to redistribute the seats then, or to wait for four years?

Hon. Mr. Robson—There is no intention to wait for four years. As to the first part of the question, it will depend upon the result of the census taking. If that does not justify any further redistribution, there will be none. I assume as a matter of almost certainty that it will justify it, but one cannot tell.

Hon. Mr. Davie—As soon as the census is taken we shall be in a position to bring down legislation. We do not want to wait four years, assuming the result renders a redistribution necessary.

A member—But this balance of power seems to keep hold, and they may say: "No, we have the balance of power, and we are going to keep to it for four years."

Hon. Mr. Robson—All we claim now is that there are no conditions known to exist to justify disturbing the balance of power, but to wait until the census is taken.

Another member—Are we to understand, if this redistribution takes place after the census, that it is to be on the lines of the whole, and without respect to the division between the Island and Mainland?

Hon. Mr. Robson—I think there can be no doubt about that at all.

A Member—It seems to me that is the root of the whole question.

Hon. Mr. Robson—If the census shows it necessary, then the time has come for a new departure.

That was the text of the Hon. Mr. Robson's remarks at that time in which I fully concurred, and by that you were told that what is known as the balance of power as between the Island and the Mainland would not be upheld for a moment but that there should be a general redistribution of seats between those sections of the Province, the Island and Mainland, based upon the population of those places; and that is the position we assumed in 1890, it is the position assumed by the last House and the position I assume to-day. At that time the voters' lists had not been revised with any particularity. I may here say that in September a