

the treaty is a suggestion that is not conceived in the best spirit that should prevail on an important question like that. We took a different course. My hon. friend has asked us why we sent my colleague, Mr. Lemieux, to Japan. I will tell him frankly. We do not suppose that the government of Japan has gone back on the understanding which we had with Japan; but our contention is that certain parties have eluded the understanding—that instead of sending their immigrants to British Columbia, which the Japanese authorities would have prevented, they sent them to another country, to Honolulu, whence they were passed over to British Columbia. Then we sent our commissioner to Tokio in order to have an understanding on this point and to have the understanding respected. This is the position we are in at the present moment, and I think it is a position that will commend itself to the judgment of the people of British Columbia when it is properly expounded to them. The people of British Columbia have certain views upon this question. I would not be honest with myself and with them were I to say that I share those views; but whilst I do not share them, I am bound to respect them. We are bound to see that the views of all people in a free country like this are given respect to. But when they know that it is our aim to have continued the condition of things which has prevailed in the last six or seven years and with which they found no fault, they must be satisfied with the position we have taken on this question.

But, Sir, I have another reproach to make against my hon. friend and a far more grievous one with regard to his conduct and language in British Columbia, and it is that the hon. gentleman, yielding to the importunities of Mr. McBride, the Prime Minister of British Columbia, has undertaken to reopen the question of the provincial subsidies which was closed here last year. My hon. friend alluding to that in his speech in Ottawa, said:

Mr. Fielding and some of his subsidized organs are distressed and disheartened because of my attitude in respect of the financial relations between British Columbia and the Dominion. From 1902 to 1904 I made a pretty careful study of this subject and in the latter year I made the following pledge to that province:

'Let me say that I have given much thought to the conditions in British Columbia, which, in your opinion, call for special attention in considering the financial relations between the Dominion and that province. You claim not only that these conditions are exceptional and peculiar to the situation and physical character of your province, but also that they are permanent in their nature. In my opinion they are such as to command immediate inquiry and investigation, to the end that any injustice clearly established may be immediately relieved.'

Nothing has since occurred which in my opinion takes away the binding character of

that pledge and during my recent campaign I told the people of British Columbia that it still held good.

Now, Sir, the hon. gentleman says that since he spoke as he did in 1904 nothing has occurred which in his opinion takes away the binding character of that pledge. Why, Sir, everything has occurred to remove the binding character of that pledge. My hon. friend is aware, everybody is aware, that that question was considered in this House not later than last session, that a new arrangement was made with the provinces to which they were all parties, and not a word of dissent from it was heard on the floor of this House, and that the resolutions have since received the sanction of an imperial Act of parliament.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. And which struck out the words 'final and unalterable.'

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Where?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. In the body of the Act, I understood.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Not in the body of the Act; but I will tell the hon. gentleman what took place. This question of provincial subsidies has been one of the most dangerous questions which this confederation has ever had to deal with. From the first the arrangement which was made was not satisfactory to any province. It was satisfactory to certain provinces that the provinces should be allowed to share in the revenues collected by the Dominion; but the arrangement embodied in the Act of Confederation was that that portion of the revenues to be allotted by the Dominion to the provinces should be fixed and permanent according to the population of 1861. I say that this arrangement was one of the weakest points in the Act of Confederation. It brought confederation indeed, upon more than one occasion, perilously near to a dissolution. The ink of the Act of Confederation of 1867 was scarcely dry when the provision there enacted was violated in favour of Nova Scotia; the year after it was violated in favour of New Brunswick; and year after year new arrangements were made, now with one province, now with another province. Such a course must have been extremely mischievous. When special provision was made with one province, it created jealousy in another, and immediately that other province made a demand for similar treatment. This went on from year to year until the provinces themselves came to the point of protesting against it, and asked for a readjustment of the subsidies. In 1887 a conference of the provinces took place at the city of Quebec, and they asked for a new settlement. Another conference took place some years afterwards, and a third and a fourth; and after we had been ten years in office we determined to have a last conference here in the city of