

to the American boundary. If hon. gentlemen will be kind enough to consider the matter a little, they will see that these territories belong to the western system rather than to the eastern system. They are only 130 miles from Winnipeg, whilst the distance from Toronto to reach them is 1,200 miles. It seems that they should more naturally fall under the jurisdiction of Manitoba than under the jurisdiction of Ontario. While dealing with that subject of frontier, I suggest to our government the idea of approaching the government of the United States in an amicable and dignified way, for the acquisition, for consideration, of a few acres of land belonging at present to that government, and lying west of the Lake of the Woods. If hon. gentlemen will look at the map, they will see a mere spot, on the west shore of the Lake of the Woods, bearing the colours of the United States. This piece of land does not seem to be of much importance to our friends in the south, while it should naturally form part of Canada. Such anomaly in the possession of the territory around Lake of the Woods has already been the cause of some friction and is liable to create at any time uneasiness between the two governments. Hence perhaps the desirability of restoring this piece of land to the country to which it seems more properly to belong, by prudent and proper negotiations with our neighbours. I throw out this suggestion for what it is worth, not wishing to unduly insist upon it.

Now I come to the question which has caused so much agitation to arise in certain parts of the country. It is a very delicate question to deal with. One is never sure in speaking on such topics that he may not hurt the feelings of others. I will try to keep within the bounds of propriety and moderation, while affirming the principles of justice and equal rights. My intention is to give to my remarks on this subject the character of an explanation rather than of a discussion. Much of the feeling exhibited in connection with these matters is generally the result of some misapprehension. It is with the view of clearing up such misunderstandings, in so far as my ability may go, that I venture to address this House on the measure now before us.

In the first place, is the clause 17, formerly 16, within the jurisdiction of parliament? I have no hesitation in saying that it is. The constitution gives this parliament the full power to make laws for the good government of the country when creating new provinces out of the Northwest Territories. Let me here refer to the British North America Act, 1867, as foreshadowing the union of the territories to Canada. For, as it has been said elsewhere during the last five months, we must, every class and every one of us, rest upon the constitution for every safeguard to our liberties. It is not only the solid rock upon which stands our political fabric, but it is moreover the bridge which permits us to meet, whatever may be the distance which separates us in certain matters. Let us adhere firmly to our constitution, and confederation will be maintained and will work smoothly. Clause 146 of the British North America Act, 1867, expresses itself as follows:

It shall be lawful for the Queen, by and with the advice of Her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council on addresses from the Houses of the Parliament of Canada, to admit Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territory, or either of them, into the union; on such terms and conditions in each case as are in the addresses expressed and as the Queen thinks fit to approve, subject to the provisions of this Act.

Some years afterwards, in 1871, the imperial parliament passed what is known as the British North America Act, 1871. By this Act it was provided, section 2, that:

The parliament of Canada may, from time to time, establish new provinces in any territories forming for the time being part of the Dominion of Canada, but not included in any province thereof, and may, at the time of such establishment, make provision for the constitution and administration of any such province, and for the passing of laws for the peace, order and good government of such province, and for its representation in the said parliament.

Please remark that in this legislation full jurisdiction is given to Canada to create provinces and make provision for the constitution of the province and for passing of laws for the peace, order and good government of such province. The words which are to be found in the British North America Act, 1867, viz.: 'Subject to the provisions of this Act' are omitted in the Act, 1871. So that the parliament of Canada is under no restraint or limitation as to its legislative power, with regard to the matters now under our consideration.