

Redistribution Commission

objection made by the hon. member for Edmonton West, that you are going to provide agreement, but that in the alternative the government wins.

Mr. Pickersgill: I think the hon. gentleman must have misunderstood me. I said the Speaker of the House of Commons would resolve the difference. The one thing I will not recommend to this house is that any decision on this matter be made by the governor in council; I think that would be entirely wrong, and I want to make that very clear. That would be taking redistribution away from the house and putting it in the hands of the cabinet, and I do not want to see that done. I want to be absolutely sure that both sides of the house have an equal voice. And I mean an equal voice—no preference, no matter who is the government. Because otherwise I do not think the public would be satisfied that the matter is being handled fairly. That is the point. With regard to the actual mechanics of it, we had to make some suggestion, until some alternative is found. After all, the Speaker, when we elected him, was elected to be an impartial person, and that was why he was suggested. If it was the chief justice of Canada I would be equally well satisfied. But it would have to be somebody like that.

Mr. Aiken: Then I think that answers the point I was making, because our concern is that if there was the provision that in the event of disagreement the governor in council would make the appointment, that would in effect mean that if there was no agreement the government would make the appointment.

Mr. Pickersgill: That will not happen.

Mr. Aiken: As we go along and prod the Secretary of State a little about those matters which concern us, I think we may get round to the point where we feel this resolution is worthy of adoption.

Mr. Pickersgill: Could I prod the hon. gentleman a little, and perhaps the whole committee, and suggest that if we adopt the resolution and see the two bills a lot of these questions would be answered by the hon. gentlemen themselves, instead of my having to get up and give previews of little corners of the bills. I would rather have all of the bills seen; but I am in the hands of the committee.

Mr. Aiken: I just want to say that we are hopeful that if the bill contains some very bad principles the government will change it before it is brought in.

Mr. Pickersgill: Or after. They can be changed at any stage.

Mr. Pigeon: But we like your voice.

[Translation]

Mr. Chretien: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make some remarks concerning this resolution, which deals with the position of commissioner and the readjustment of the representation in the house.

First of all, I must say that I strongly favour the establishment of an independent commission. I believe that the house must endeavour to find a solution to the satisfaction of all parties in the house.

It is necessary that the representation be changed because we find today abnormalities, situations which are no longer normal.

For instance, we see that there are members who represent constituencies 10, 15 and even 20 times more populous than others. I am of the opinion that every voter in the country has a right to be adequately represented.

We know that it is a difficult situation and that it needs to be corrected. We should then apply ourselves to find the most equitable solution for every Canadian voter because the house must reflect the true image of the Canadian people.

I fully agree with the principles put forward up to now to the effect that it is essential to find an appropriate solution in the near future. To this end, we should set up ten commissions which would look into the problem of every province. In this way, we could effect an adequate redistribution sooner, in order that the country may be duly represented in the house.

In my opinion, the formula used in Australia, with a 20 per cent tolerance between the most and the least populated ridings, should perhaps be applied here in Canada, in order to have more adequate representation in the house.

A most interesting point was raised, that is whether we should increase the membership of this house. Personally, I do not think so because I cannot see what useful purpose it would serve. It is hard enough as it is to deal with the estimates and bills with the number of members there is now that, in my view, to increase it would greatly reduce the efficiency of the house.

I am convinced that it would be in the national interest to have just about the same representation after redistribution.

After studying the resolution, I notice that it does not mention a detail which, while not of capital importance, has nevertheless some value.

A few months ago, I raised in the house the point that the names of some ridings are often inadequate. It is very difficult for the