

Redistribution

in the light of such situations as the one I have just referred to where in effect favouritism has been shown to the Minister of National Revenue by throwing 49 townships into the huge riding of Hastings-Frontenac with a population about 35 per cent in excess of the much smaller riding of Renfrew South next door to it.

Some government supporters spoke to me at noon yesterday and said: "Now, you remember what the Prime Minister said this morning. We do not think you paid enough attention to it. You remember that he said that when we reached each of these individual cases that have been particularly mentioned they will be looked at with great sincerity and every member of the house will have the opportunity to reach the right conclusion and take the right vote on them." The suggestion was made to me that what we people in the opposition should do was to call off the fight then because the Prime Minister had said in effect that if we just waited until we reached the particular cases in the schedule everything was going to be all right and certain things were going to be done that would leave everybody happy. They said to me, "Why are you carrying on the fight?"

Mr. Rooney: Did you believe it?

Mr. Fleming: No, I did not. I have been dealing with the Liberals in this house too long to believe that. However, there was an opportunity to test the validity of that kind of cajolery, and we saw yesterday afternoon in the house when we came to each of these individual cases—

Mr. Martin: Don't break that desk.

Mr. Fleming: It is too bad the Minister of National Health and Welfare is not right here at my desk now.

Mr. Graydon: Better to break the desk than to break a promise.

Mr. Fleming: We had an opportunity yesterday to see just how much weight should be attached to the brave words of the Prime Minister—just wait until these individual cases are reached; everybody is going to be so independent; everybody is going to do the right thing; you can count on our members; they are all great fellows with independent minds and they are going to do the right thing in these cases. Well, you know how that went—one out of 555 government votes was independent—and the Prime Minister's was not that one.

Yes, the government yesterday gave not one inch in a single one of these most flagrant and disgraceful cases of gerrymandering.

Not one inch did they give after all those beautiful words yesterday morning. Mr. Speaker, in the light of what has happened, in the light of the wish of hon. members that statements made in this house should be serious, would it not then have been very much better if the Prime Minister had not said anything at all yesterday morning?

Then, Mr. Speaker, we witnessed in the course of debate that exposure of that most cynical attitude on the part of the government which goes a long way to explain what they are doing in this callous manner. You will remember that I was venturing to put forward the argument that the public should have an ample opportunity of reviewing what is proposed with respect to constituency boundaries—because after all it is the public that is going to be affected by them in the vote—and that the matter should not be proceeded with hastily and should be allowed to stand for the present time, as there will be an opportunity later in this present session when the house reconvenes on the 20th November. *Hansard* records my remarks and certain interjections at page 4101 yesterday morning as follows. I am reported as saying:

What could be fairer under those circumstances than that the public should have ample opportunity to review this matter and to make the views of the public known to members who are going to have to take the responsibility eventually of voting on the schedule and the bill.

Mr. Abbott: The public do not care; it is only the members who care.

Mr. Mutch: The hon. gentleman is overestimating public interest in what goes on here.

Mr. Fleming: That is a most significant statement. The Minister of Finance says that the public does not care and the parliamentary assistant—

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Fleming: Yes, he did; he certainly did.

Mr. McIlraith: No, he did not.

Mr. McIlraith: Finish it.

Mr. Fleming: The gentleman last referred to said that the Minister of Finance—

Mr. Bradley: Read the rest of it.

Mr. Fleming: I think the Minister of Finance will probably regret making this most lamentable interjection to the end of his political days.

An hon. Member: You hope!

Mr. Fleming: Nevertheless the statement was that the Minister of Finance did not say what he did say. We who were just a short distance removed from the Minister of Finance and directly facing him heard what he said and correctly repeated in the house what he did say, but we were told by the hon. member for Ottawa West who was sitting behind the minister and obviously did not hear what the minister said: "No, he did not". However, we become accustomed to those things.