

right to do anything or enact any legislation that could interfere with their true autonomy. If ever the parliament of Canada manifested its intention of amending the Canadian constitution to the detriment of certain rights, privileges or prerogatives of the provinces, and if it decided to take such action without their explicit consent, I would be the first to rise against such an attitude.

I was not elected to this house to have a hand in sabotaging the constitution. I never want to become the opponent and the enemy of the rights of minorities and of the provinces. I shall never be a party to a measure the purpose of which is to take away from my province or from the other provinces their respective privileges and rights. On the other hand, when it shall rest in my power within this parliament and on the floor of this house to have a hand by my attitude, by my words, or by my vote in correcting an injustice done to a minority or to a province; when it shall be given to me to defend the weak and the oppressed in this Canadian democracy, I shall not shrink from my responsibilities and I shall record my vote in support of the measure that shall seek that end.

If, as in the present instance, it is once again my party that takes this initiative of righting a wrong or correcting an injustice; if it is my party that constitutes itself the defender of minority rights or of the true prerogatives of the provinces; if it is my group that takes upon itself to be the real champion of true autonomy I shall be proud and happy to belong to it. Such is, I believe, the stand which every Canadian should take in respect of the present measure, and here is a true means of defending Canadian democracy in this chamber.

When opponents of this proposed redistribution had occasion before to discuss the problem, they did not always take the same stand. That is why certain facts connected with the position taken by our opponents of the Progressive Conservative party should be pointed out. They clearly show how inconsistent are some of their present statements.

The present measure is not new. It has been discussed every time there has been a question of redistributing the electoral districts. After each census, the government of the day, in order to abide by the constitution, was required to introduce a redistribution bill, and on every occasion such a bill was the subject of discussion in the House of Commons. On the occasion of each of those discussions or debates when it was Canada's good fortune to have a government directed by the party to which I belong, that government always took the same stand. It always

strived to have redistribution carried out with all necessary dispatch and in the same spirit of justice and equity.

It really seems that on this occasion, too, it will fall to the Tory group which has so often changed its name and its leaders, but which has not often changed its policy, to be the first to combat a measure the principle of which is the very keystone of our political institutions and of our system of government. But it is in the attitude our opponents have adopted since the census of 1941 with reference to the very question we are now discussing that their inconsistency appears to us in full light.

In the course of the year 1943, especially, the Minister of Justice had to introduce in this house a resolution asking that the adjustment of the representation from the provinces be postponed and redistribution deferred until the war against our enemies, Germany, Italy and Japan, had been brought to a close. As in the present case, the resolution proposed a change in the provisions of the British North America Act. I think it will serve a useful purpose to refer thereto and to read that part of the resolution so that we may fully grasp the change then sought in our constitution. This is the text of the preamble of the resolution introduced on July 5, 1943, which I shall now read:

Whereas provisions of the British North America Act require that, on the completion of each decennial census, the representation of the provinces in the House of Commons shall be readjusted . . .

Then, further on, at the conclusion of the petition itself, I read this:

Notwithstanding anything in the British North America Acts . . . it shall not be necessary that the representation of the provinces in the House of Commons be readjusted, in consequence of the completion of the decennial census taken in the year 1941, until the first session of the parliament of Canada commencing after the cessation of hostilities between Canada and the German Reich, the Kingdom of Italy and the Empire of Japan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I contend, by that resolution the provisions of our constitution were directly affected, as is the case in the present resolution. In fact the Minister of Justice was then seeking much more than he now seeks by the resolution under consideration. He asked for something more than an amendment of the British North America Act. He was asking the imperial parliament to allow the Canadian parliament not to carry out the terms of that constitution. He asked that parliament ignore the provisions of section 51 for a period of time which it was then impossible to determine. He asked that the application of our constitution to the then existing

[Mr. Pinard.]