

British North America Act

and duties of the redistribution commission and he provisionally set up in his bill an ideal commission and the principles under which it should operate. If you set up an independent commission the principles have to be fairly hard and fast, otherwise the members will not know how they are going to operate. A House of Commons committee is going to have to settle this whole Saskatchewan fiasco, but this is in the future—the question of Saskatchewan dropping three seats—and in the redistribution we have to decide first, is it going to be representation by population. Are we going to have a formula such as that existing in Manitoba, namely seven city votes as against four rural votes? Are we going to have something like Victoria in Australia where you have 22-15-8 formula worked out? My own suggestion, from looking at the question, is that we need to give that commission a principle which allows them a 30 per cent tolerance in assigning constituencies in terms of population, so that we can wipe out many of these tremendous disparities in our present system, as hon. members will see when they look at the statistics. I think the commission should operate within the framework of this representation by population principle with some such tolerance or some other principle to take care of the plain fact that you cannot tailor every constituency in terms of population and you cannot even come close to it in terms of making it equal in area.

However, I would like all hon. members to look at this brief which does show the tremendous disadvantages suffered by the hon. member for Grand Falls-White River-Labrador (Mr. Granger) and the hon. member for Cariboo (Mr. Henderson) and myself.

Finally I would like to say that this is an impartial matter and I hope it will be treated as such by all members who take part in this debate. It is not necessarily a party point of view which I am expressing here, although in the past when Mr. Knowles moved an amendment to set up an independent commission he received his strongest support from the present leaders of the government party. However, it is not something which has been confined to the C.C.F. group. Mr. Power, as a Liberal member of this House of Commons, was strongly for it and I believe many of the present government members were for it too.

The bibliography will be in *Hansard* and I hope that hon. members will follow it up and read the different points of view. Especially would I mention that almost every intelligent writer who has looked at this problem has laughed to scorn members of parliament for their behaviour at redistribution

[Mr. Fisher.]

time. Let us therefore, for once, raise the whole dignity of proceedings by starting early—four years before election—and approaching the whole matter on a rational basis so that in four years' time we will not have the stigma of looking like a bunch of rabbits, with all of us standing up, shouting and jeering at the government for steamrolling and having Conservative members throwing their laughter back at us.

These are the main reasons why I believe we should give very serious consideration to the bill before the house at the present time.

Mr. Crestohl: May I ask the hon. member a question or two. I think he has made a very logical case, but just what does he mean by a committee independent of the parliament of Canada, and does he not think that the suggestion that that committee should report back to parliament would have the effect of watering down its independence?

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Speaker, the point raised by the hon. member was dealt with very ably by the Prime Minister in 1953 when he was outlining the experience in the United Kingdom where they have an independent commission which does report to parliament and, since the first report it brought in, there has been very little argument or change; such changes as have been made being very minor in nature. In Great Britain it has worked very satisfactorily. As a matter of fact, only parliament can pass a redistribution brought in by that commission.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I must say to the hon. member who has presented this bill that I am opposed to it as presented. I think this proposition is another move in the direction of removing from parliament its inherent rights. I feel it is a delegation by parliament of control over its own affairs unless the body or committee is very clearly defined in the bill. My first and main objection to the bill is just this; it is not clear as to just what sort of body or commission is intended to be set up to deal with this very important duty of parliament.

I appreciate that the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher) has brought in this bill in an effort to get rid of what is known as gerrymandering and I may say that there has been a great deal of this in the past. In the riding which I have the honour to represent, Parry Sound-Muskoka, the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell) was defeated in 1949 as a result of a gerrymander and, as the hon. member who sponsored the bill has said, the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he was the hon. member for Lake Centre had his riding not only gerrymandered but eliminated. Fortunately for