

of the Canadian parliament to have redistribution before the next election? Second, will the government say now that there will be such a redistribution?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: To the first question I would reply in the affirmative without the slightest hesitation. As to the second question, I would hope the government would take the initiative in having that responsibility of parliament to the people of Canada satisfactorily discharged before another election.

Mr. BRACKEN: From some remarks of the minister in the earlier part of his speech I gathered there was some responsibility devolving upon parliament as distinguished from the government. Surely the minister does not mean to leave the impression that there is a responsibility upon parliament which the government itself can avoid?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Not at all. I hoped I had clearly stated that those who are members of the government, with the exception of its leader in the other place, are members of the house. They all, I think, feel their responsibility, not only equally with other members of the house but probably to a greater degree, because they have some control over the disposition of the time of the house in dealing with legislation.

Mr. MacNICOL: If I may I should like to ask the minister one more question, because I did not quite understand his reply to the observation I made a few moments ago as to the necessity of obtaining the consent of the legislatures of the four provinces originally entering into confederation before the British North America Act can be amended, in regard to any amendment pertaining to anything to which they consented when they formed confederation.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Of course I am not making a judicial pronouncement; I am merely expressing my own opinion. In my opinion there is no necessity to get the consent of any of the provincial legislatures in regard to any amendment which would affect the representation of the people in this parliament.

Mr. MacNICOL: I had not reference to the representation in this parliament but to any amendment of the British North America Act pertaining to matters to which the four original provinces consented when they formed confederation.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: On that point I do not think the jurisdiction which was assigned to the provincial legislatures by the British North America Act can be taken away from them in any way without their consent.

Mr. MacNICOL: I agree.

Mr. JEAN-FRANÇOIS POULIOT (Temiscouata): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the mover (Mr. Dorion) and the seconder of the motion, also the hon. member for Prov-encher (Mr. Jutras), and the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent) who have spoken so well on this matter. I congratulate also the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bracken) and my good friend, the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. MacNicol), upon the very able questions they have put to the minister in an effort to clarify the situation. That having been said, may I be permitted to express the opinion of the man on the street. In doing this I shall try to keep away from subtleties and legal distinctions, but I shall remind the house of what happened in the past.

In the first place, let me say that the present system is unjust. Why is it unjust? It is unjust because it was pronounced to be unjust by the Liberal party in 1933. I remember what happened when the Redistribution Act was brought down by the federal government of that day. It was a shame. The whole thing was wrongly done. Those in charge for the province of Quebec were a gentleman who was a minister at the time and who is now a judge, and another gentleman who has since died. He was a millionaire and he now rests in the Lord, I hope. They were together and they helped to frame that awful and shameful piece of legislation. That is the system that is at present in force.

The minister was very candid when he said that this matter should be considered from a high plane. Theoretically he is right, but practically it has been done otherwise except by the Liberal party, which has always been just and fair. Hon. members should read in *Hansard* of the Tory gerrymander of 1893, which was described by no less a person than Sir Wilfrid Laurier as gerrymander with a vengeance. What did he do in 1903 when he was Prime Minister of Canada? He saw that it was corrected. Then we had the same experience in 1933. Mr. Bennett thought that he would remain in power by carving the constituencies into the most incredible designs. It would be interesting if hon. members of the house would go to the office of the chief electoral officer and ask for plans of the constituencies to see what was done to bring a Tory parish into another constituency in order to give an unpopular member a chance to be elected against the will of the people. All hon. members complained about it in the session of 1932-33, and I remember the last week of that session was spent in discussing this very matter. Of course the government changed nothing.