

Redistribution

Prime Minister phrased in such brave words? There was an opportunity given with respect to each of these situations, each of the individual cases that had been mentioned by the Prime Minister, and what was the result? In each one of those cases the government majority voted down the amendment introduced by the opposition. There were nine such amendments and in the nine votes a total of 555 votes were cast by government supporters. How many of them saw fit to show a measure of independence? One government supporter on one vote, the hon. member for Lincoln, decided to be consistent. The hon. member for Lincoln having firmly supported the ground that county boundaries should not be interfered with in the case of his own county felt obliged to maintain consistency by voting in favour of the amendment of the hon. member for Huron North not to interfere with the boundaries of Huron county but to make Huron county the riding of Huron.

The proportion of independence shown by government supporters in the house, in view of the brave words of the Prime Minister, is one out of 555. Perhaps that proportion is a little higher than usual but I think it is a fair indication of how empty are words that profess to show independence, even independence from the government if you please, in the light of the hard realities of government discipline in the house.

Mr. McIlraith: I wonder if you could give us the figures for your party.

Mr. Fleming: The fact of the matter is every member of our party voted in favour of each of these amendments, but we were not included in the scope of these brave words of the Prime Minister's appeal. The Prime Minister was indicating to his followers that they were free to vote according to their views, and that is the way they exercised their freedom. That is a fine showing of independence on the part of government supporters. Therefore I will not need to spend very much time on this talk about Liberal members in the house being free to vote.

What about the Prime Minister himself in discharging what he referred to as his responsibility in connection with these individual cases? They are the individual cases concerning which votes were taken on amendments introduced by the opposition. The Prime Minister was present for the first five of these votes taken yesterday afternoon and he was not present for the four votes last evening, but in every one of the five votes when he was present he lined up eagerly with all the Liberal members in the house and all the government ministers to vote solidly against the opposition amendments.

[Mr. Fleming.]

So we see very clearly just how much independence the Prime Minister was prepared to show, whether as Prime Minister or as the member for Quebec East, in departing from the recommendations of the Liberal majority on the redistribution committee. We saw the Prime Minister voting to perpetrate these gerrymanders, these flagrant abuses of the redistribution process, and to perpetrate inequalities in representation in such cases as were discussed yesterday, the extermination of Haldimand and in the process the representation thereof by the present member. The Prime Minister was not in the house when the vote was taken with respect to Lake Centre but I suppose we may assume, in view of his unbroken record yesterday afternoon in voting five times against five opposition amendments to cure and eradicate these gerrymanders, that if he had been in the house last night when the other four votes were taken he would have voted in the same way. Every government minister who voted on every one of these nine amendments voted precisely in the same way. They voted against the opposition amendments to cure the injustices that were about to be perpetrated by the government majority.

Questions put to the Prime Minister before the taking of some of these votes remained unanswered. I might remind the house that before the vote was taken in connection with the changes in the riding of Frontenac-Addington and the riding of Hastings-Peterborough to create an empire in the new riding of Hastings-Frontenac—

Mr. McIlraith: It is the tenth in size in the province.

Mr. Fleming: —I put a question to the Prime Minister. I asked him whether it was the Prime Minister's conception of fairness that this riding of Hastings-Frontenac should be created in the way proposed by the government majority on the redistribution committee, having in it a population of over 43,000, while right next door is the riding of Renfrew South represented by the Minister of National Revenue with less than half the area and with a population of only 31,000. That question was not answered. The Prime Minister had several opportunities to answer it but he judiciously refrained from doing so. The Prime Minister then voted against our amendment.

We have had an opportunity to test the brave words uttered yesterday morning by the Prime Minister for the benefit of himself and his followers by what happened in the house yesterday afternoon. We shall judge those words in the light of the votes taken,