

the redistribution of electoral divisions in accordance with the procedure clearly stated in section 51 of the Confederation Act.

In asking and demanding that the government observe the provisions set forth in the British North America Act, we are requesting not a privilege, or a favour, but simply and solely full respect for the prerogatives which were guaranteed to us by the Fathers of Confederation. It is important that the hon. members who represent the maritime provinces, the western provinces and Ontario should not forget that the injustice done to the province of Quebec affects them directly inasmuch as it established as a precedent through which the government will later be enabled to mete out to them a partial and arbitrary treatment.

We do not intend to bother anyone with this problem which must be solved without delay. Every day since the opening of the session, the house has heard hon. ministers complain of the hard times we are going through and admit their helplessness in transforming the dictatorship they inflicted on the country in war time into a real working democracy. I have every sympathy for the government and am willing to cooperate with them so as to ease their burden, but these feelings of mine cannot make me forget that those who brought about the present social and economic chaos are the very ones who now complain of the logical results of the instructions, enactments, orders and abuses approved or issued by them as the case may be during the past six years.

Mr. LESAGE: To what great economic chaos is the hon. member referring?

Mr. GAGNON (Translation): Because of weakness or childish fear, no one would assume, in 1943, the responsibility of guaranteeing to each province the fair share of representation to which it is entitled. We waited in the hope that time would settle everything and that the people, burdened by war and unable to cope with the impending crisis, might, in 1945, allow the central authority to solve the problem as it saw fit. Unfortunately, the evil, to which the wrong remedy was applied, still remains very acute.

The temporary measure voted by the government in 1943 has now reached its date of expiry since it is clearly mentioned in the bill submitted to the privy council that the amendment to the constitution ceases to be effective at the first session held by parliament after the end of the war between Canada on the one side, and Germany, Italy and Japan on the other. I understand that according to the figures obtained through the 1941 census, Manitoba and Saskatchewan will now

have a smaller number of representatives in the House of Commons; the former will elect only 14 members instead of 17, the latter 17 instead of 21. I maintain, however, that as long as the provisions of the British North America Act are not modified, we must abide, in every respect, by the terms of the pact agreed to by the fathers of confederation. At this time, it may be fitting to recall that in 1881, the province of Nova Scotia had 21 members; in 1891, 20; in 1901, 18; in 1911, 16, in 1921, 14 and in 1931, 12. Therefore, if in Nova Scotia, we applied the principle of representation according to the 1867 basis, it is only fair, nowadays, to put the law into effect as regards Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When this latter province joined confederation, it was granted a representation of 4 members and, in 1881, if the legislators of the time had abided strictly by the figures, Manitoba would have been entitled to only three members while it was allowed 5. The same thing holds for British Columbia which secured, on joining confederation, the privilege of sending to Ottawa 6 members representing no more than 40,000 inhabitants. Nowhere is it mentioned in our historical records that these favours brought about any revolution, raised the race cry or destroyed the harmonious understanding of the Canadian people. At present, under subsection 4 of section 51 of the British North America Act, which provides that the number of representatives of a province shall not be reduced unless its population decreases by one-twentieth of the Canadian population, the province of Ontario will still elect the same number of members, 82, that is, one per 46,191 inhabitants, while the electoral quota of the province of Quebec is one member per 51,213 inhabitants. As I said a while ago, however, this advantage in favour of Ontario which, normally, would be entitled to only 74 representatives, will be detrimental to Quebec and the other provinces of the dominion as long as the constitution has not been amended.

In order to amend the constitution, the unanimous consent of the provinces is required. The former minister of justice, the Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe, pointed this out in the House of Commons in 1925 when he stated that confederation is the result of a pact between the provinces which reached a compromise and relinquished certain rights to the central authority, and the dominion cannot amend its constitution without securing the consent of the provinces which have created it and which complement the dominion government in the exercise of their powers. Sir Robert Borden stated during a debate several years ago: "that there is no reason to modify in any way the terms of our constitution and I am inclined to think that it is necessary to consult the