

claimed that the principle at stake is not vigorously enough defended, but the result nevertheless is to prevent its application in a practical form.

Such really seems to be the attitude of most of those who oppose in this house the adoption of the present measure for the redistribution of electoral ridings. All opponents declare themselves in favour of the principle but they devise means of preventing the adoption of the resolution.

The principal means our opponents resort to consists in stating that the Canadian parliament has no right to ask for an amendment of the constitution without having previously secured the consent of the provinces. In the present resolution the Canadian parliament asks the imperial parliament to amend the constitution by changing the terms of section 51 of the British North America Act, which relates to the representation in the House of Commons, and making therein the modifications set out in the resolution.

Utilizing this makeshift means with that much skill our opponents, among whom we even number, strange to say, the premier of Quebec, who thus is a party to their attitude, once again wave the flag of provincial autonomy and shout about the spoliation of provincial rights.

In the first place, I venture to declare that the attitude of the premier of Quebec is all the more singular since it is not supported by the few friends he has in this house. He knows the provisions of the resolution we are now considering; he knows that its purpose is to increase the number of the representatives of the province he directs; he knows that the measure would increase the number of federal members of the province of Quebec from sixty-five to seventy-three; he also knows, I presume, that this resolution is the one and only means of increasing Quebec's representation in Canada's parliament. He must conclude, as I do, that, failing this resolution, the figure of Quebec's deputation would remain unchanged.

Finally and especially he must know the injustice that would ensue if, notwithstanding the increase in its population since the census of 1931, the province of Quebec retained the same number of members at Ottawa and consequently suffered a real injustice by comparison with the other provinces of this country.

It is all one to him; what seems to count with him is that he resorts to the cry to which we have become accustomed over a span of several years, namely, that he claims once again that Ottawa is attacking Quebec's

autonomy. He states in open letter to the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent) that the provinces must be consulted and yield their consent before the Canadian parliament seeks the proposed amendment from the imperial parliament.

In other words, the premier of Quebec exacts that Ontario, British Columbia and the other provinces should agree and give their assent before the Canadian parliament does justice to the province of Quebec. He wills and requires that the other provinces say yes before the parliament sitting at Ottawa is authorized to increase from sixty-five to seventy-three the number of federal members from the province of Quebec.

If that is the premier of Quebec's way of defending his province and the French minority it constitutes in Canada, if it is by surrendering its destinies to the decision of the other provinces that the premier of Quebec wants to protect his own province, I prefer the stand I shall adopt by defending with all my strength in this house the resolution now under consideration and the principle it sanctions.

I shall better defend the minority to which I belong; I shall better understand the spirit of the constitution and of the Canadian confederation; I shall better protect my compatriots, and I shall better do them justice by enabling them to secure the additional representatives it is their right and their duty to demand. Facing my conscience and mindful of my oath of office, I shall thus better understand my duties toward my province and toward the other provinces.

As for the attitude of the other opponents of the resolution, of those who in this house combat it by also resorting to the same means, I believe such an attitude is unjust and illogical. When they ask that the provinces be consulted and their assent secured, I say to them that the House of Commons is master of its own destinies. I claim that the Canadian parliament alone must decide who shall represent the population of this country at Ottawa. I believe that it is not incumbent on Canada's parliament to consult the provinces in order to alter the electoral districts.

Finally, I declare that the parliament of Canada is no more required to have recourse to a consultation or to seek consent any more than the provincial legislatures have done so or are bound to do so when it is a question of altering their representation in the provincial assemblies. I acknowledge, however—and I want my attitude in this respect to be clearly understood—that the provincial parliaments are also sole masters of their destinies. I declare that the central parliament has no