

*Electoral Boundaries Commission*

Then, he describes the nature of the recommendations, and says that the Hon. C. G. Power disclosed in 1947 that the government had had a bill prepared in 1940 to set up a commission composed of a superior court judge as chairman, assisted by two commissioners appointed from each province in turn as its constituencies came under consideration.

I mentioned a moment ago that there has been experience in this regard in the United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa. All of these countries have had a system similar in nature, but differing in particulars because each country has its own peculiar problems. Each is designed however, to remove as far as is practical and possible, the question of redistribution from a purely party matter. In the United Kingdom, the redistribution of seats is provided for by the House of Commons redistribution of seats act, 1949 and 1958. There is a continuous review of the distribution of seats. It is carried on by four permanent boundary commissions, one for England, one for Scotland, one for Wales and one for Northern Ireland. Each boundary commission consists of four members, and in determining the redistribution of seats must take into account local interests. It is required to give persons in the constituency that may be affected by a change in redistribution the opportunity of making representations.

There is parliamentary control; for as soon as possible after a report is made by the boundary commission to the secretary of state, that minister must lay the report before parliament. If changes have been recommended by the boundary commission, there must accompany the reports laid before parliament draft orders in council which are to show how effect is proposed to be given to the recommendations of the boundary commission. If each house of parliament, by resolution, approves the draft orders they are submitted to Her Majesty. If the draft orders in council are not so approved by resolution by each house of parliament, amended drafts may be laid before parliament.

In South Africa, when it was a member of the commonwealth, the redistribution of seats was provided for under the South Africa act, 1909. There, a commission of judges is appointed. In Australia redistribution is dealt with by the commonwealth electoral act, 1918. The number of members to be elected is ascertained by dividing the population of the commonwealth by twice the number of senators. The distribution of each state into an electoral division is carried out by three distribution commissioners appointed by the governor general. One of the distribution commissioners must be the chief electoral

officer or an officer having similar qualifications, and one must be the surveyor general of the state or an officer having similar qualifications. Now, without revealing in any way what is in the bill, I think it would be generally agreed that the electoral officer, occupying as he does a completely independent position, should be one of the members of this commission.

I return to the point I was dealing with a moment ago, the reference to the Hon. C. G. Power, now a member of the other place. In 1952, he set out certain general principles as to redistribution. He said that we must start afresh; that parliament should maintain its control and responsibility over the action it takes with respect to redistribution and that we must lay down some set of rules and regulations upon which we can base future redistribution. Then, as reported at page 3183 of *Hansard* for 1952, after referring to the need for a brand new redistribution, he said:

—it should be taken out of the responsibility of members of the house.

He did emphasize, however, the need for parliamentary responsibility.

When I spoke of the functions of a boundary commission in July, 1947, I said this:

That commission is one which is above partisanship. Parliament still rules; parliament still controls; but parliament would not act unfairly against a political opponent.

If the recommendation of this committee—

And I am referring to an independent committee.

—were to the effect that a certain change should be made, it would adopt it even though it might be helpful to an opponent.

Now, sir, this whole question was discussed at length in the United States case to which I referred earlier, *Baker v. Carr*, which I think all hon. members could read with benefit to themselves. It deals with the urbanization of the United States and the degree to which a major portion of the population was finding itself more and more concentrated in certain areas.

I come now to the question of what would happen in the event that we maintain the present number of seats in the house, having regard to the changes that have taken place in population. Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island would continue with the same representation. Nova Scotia would lose one seat. New Brunswick would have the same; Quebec would have the same; Ontario would gain three; Manitoba would lose one; Saskatchewan would lose four; Alberta would gain two and British Columbia would gain one.

There have been some suggestions made that there should be an increase in the number of members in the house. What would