

*Redistribution*

Mr. MacNICOL: To complete the record, is the minister able to give the citation for the special consideration given to the Yukon?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I know that the Yukon is entitled to at least one representative, but I do not happen to have the text at hand which provides that.

Mr. KNOWLES: It is not determined by the British North America Act; it is within the competence of parliament to decide. I quote from the document published in connection with that matter.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Therefore I am not making any plea to-day for any special interest or issue; I am merely suggesting, as one of the members of parliament, that when the matter of redistribution comes up I would expect parliament to give consideration to the question whether or not the old rule should continue to be applied, or whether there would be at that time a proposal to put representation back on a proportionate basis for each and every one of the provinces. I would expect that to be a matter which would be given serious consideration by parliament because, speaking personally and not as Minister of Justice, I think there is a good deal in the suggestion that this is what was intended by the fathers of confederation. We do not personally remember what the controversy was in regard to "rep by pop," but we have all read about it and we all know that the desire of Upper Canada to have proper proportionate representation was one of the motives which started the discussions for a new constitution to replace that of the union under which both Upper and Lower Canada were given the same number of representatives in their joint parliament.

The matter of redistribution certainly will have to be dealt with by parliament, or parliament will be failing in the responsibility which results from the constitution itself. In 1943 the government took the responsibility of recommending to parliament an address to His Majesty to have an amendment passed postponing redistribution until after the cessation of hostilities. There has been no thought in the mind of anyone to take the responsibility of requesting a further postponement of redistribution. It may well be that this house itself will wish to take that responsibility if it comes to the conclusion that it would be unfair to carry out a redistribution which would bring about the results that have been indicated by some hon. members. That is something which will have to be determined by the house itself, by the members of the house; and whatever the determination is, I confidently expect that there will be a redistribution which will con-

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

form with the constitution either as it is or as it is made to be after proper amendment. It is my earnest hope that when this is done it will not be regarded as a government proposal, but as something done by the parliament of Canada itself to discharge its responsibility to those who elect members to this house, something that will be done completely without any partisan feeling, because we all owe it to our constituents to do everything possible to keep this institution in the high regard to which it is entitled as a truly democratic, representative institution of the people of Canada. I think it would be detrimental to the best interests of Canadian democracy to have it felt that this was being dealt with as a football to be tossed about in partisan discussion or conflict. It is much more than that. It is the true representation of the Canadian people in a free parliament which is required, and that should be the only object each of us will seek to attain when we come to deal with the redistribution of its membership.

I wished to mention one further point, although not for the purpose of raising any controversy about it. The suggestion has been made that there can be no amendment of the British North America Act which would affect the representation of the people of the provinces in this house without the consent of the provincial legislatures.

Mr. MacNICOL: Does that not mean only the consent of the four provinces which originally entered into confederation?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I am not sure what it means, but even if it means that much I would not agree with it, because in my view that is not something which by the British North America Act is confided to the jurisdiction of the provincial legislatures. The provincial legislatures have to deal with matters assigned to them by that act; but the representation of the Canadian people in this parliament, no matter in what province they live, is not something which has been placed under the care of the provincial legislatures. It is within the jurisdiction of this house and of the members elected to this house by the inhabitants of the several provinces.

Mr. BRACKEN: Before the minister sits down I wonder if he would mind making clear the answers to two questions. His remarks satisfied me on these points, but perhaps he will not object to making himself perfectly clear with respect to them. These questions do not deal with the technicalities of the present situation but with the practical matter of whether or not we are to have redistribution before the next election. First, does the minister recognize a responsibility on the part