

Redistribution

any stretch of the imagination be said to provide a satisfactory redistribution. Even after three days of deliberation in the house we are still left with extraordinary extremes. The least populous constituency in Canada under this scheme will have a population of 9,999, while the most populous has a population of some 91,000. Even in Ontario there are extremes of a low population of 28,000, on the one hand, and a high population of 91,000, on the other.

There is ample evidence that the government has felt quite uneasy about what they are doing. In many respects that uneasiness has been reflected in the remarks by and actions of the government members. I do not believe that the government has any serious confidence in the redistribution that they are now on the point of finally perpetrating. The disorders that have occurred in the house, all this continual raucous shouting on the part of government supporters, have not successfully hidden from open view the fact that the government is conscious that it is doing a job of gerrymandering and perpetrating some serious injustices.

First I should like to deal briefly with a remark made yesterday by the chairman of the redistribution committee, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, which I quote from page 4089 of *Hansard*:

Nevertheless I wish to assure hon. members that the question of a redistribution commission will be given the most serious consideration.

While that statement unhappily is belated, let us welcome it even at this time. But in welcoming it let us ask why that serious consideration that is now promised should not be given to this question right now. If the subject merits serious consideration, as is now apparently admitted, why does it not merit that serious consideration right now? There is no excuse in the face of what has happened, in the face of what was said yesterday, for deliberately pushing ahead and rushing this measure through. If the subject of an impartial redistribution commission is deserving of consideration following the census of 1961, then there is not a single answer that has been given that justifies its not being applied here and now in the light of the census of 1951.

My second observation relates to the extent of government responsibility in this matter. The Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) was at great pains yesterday morning to try to shift responsibility for this gerrymandering from the shoulders of the government to the shoulders of the house. One can understand the alacrity shown by the Prime

Minister to disavow any governmental responsibility for this botching of the job of redistribution to the advantage of the government. But when some of us said yesterday, "That kind of talk is not impressive in the face of the realities of the situation", no reply was made. We pointed out that this is a government bill standing in the name of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It is a bill that has been supported in debate by all the ministers of the government who have spoken.

If there were any so naïve as to think that any great degree of independence would be shown by supporters of the house in the face of what the Prime Minister said yesterday, then of course the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We shall judge them by their fruits. What were their fruits yesterday? There were nine divisions in the committee of the whole yesterday. Before any of those divisions occurred the Prime Minister said that he was going to ask all his members to vote, but not to do so with an eye to political advantage or disadvantage. As reported on page 4094 of *Hansard* he said:

It is the responsibility of every one of us to attempt to get a fair redistribution under this system.

Then further on he said:

I would ask all the hon. members who belong to the Liberal party not to examine these different boundaries in the light of what they may do for Liberal prospects, for Conservative prospects, for C.C.F. prospects or Social Credit prospects but in the light of what they feel is the proper thing in virtue of their responsibilities to the public generally as well as to their own constituents.

Then, further on he said:

I said at the outset and I say now that I hope each member of the house, to whatever party he belongs, will endeavour in considering each one of these matters to render his verdict and his conception of what is fair and what is in the public interest.

Then he concluded on this rather personal note. He said, as found on page 4095:

I think that when we reach each one of these individual cases—

Here he was speaking about those that had been singled out for special mention during the course of the debate as being flagrant cases of gerrymandering.

—they should be looked at with great sincerity by every member of the house and the right conclusion reached.

At the conclusion of the same paragraph he said:

I am going to take my stand on each one of these questions as it arises, not as the Prime Minister but as the member representing the constituency of Quebec East.

By their fruits ye shall know them, Mr. Speaker. What was the response of Liberal members of this house to this appeal of the