

Then it went on to alter the whole basis of representation in the Senate. That was a much more fundamental change, because the Senate has always been regarded by the minority—I think they lean upon a broken reed—as having been established to protect the rights of minorities. The resolution proposed also to alter the proportionate representation of Quebec in the upper chamber. A new and fourth division of the dominion was agreed upon, and the western provinces were to be represented by twenty-four Senators instead of the number by which they were previously represented. This was done in 1915 under the leadership of a Conservative prime minister and may I pay tribute to Sir Robert Borden by saying that he was possibly one of the greatest constitutional lawyers who has ever sat in this house. This was done by and with the consent of all the parties in this house. Therefore I am amazed to see in 1946, thirty-one years later, an amendment moved in this house which would bring a new basis into confederation. We who represent the western parts of this country are extremely anxious to see that the representation in this parliament of the western provinces shall be adequate. I believe it is the intention of the government to try to give that representation at this time. On the basis of representation by population according to provinces I shall support the resolution.

My hon. friend spent a great deal of time trying to frighten the house with what might happen in the future if the communist party came to power. Let me tell my hon. friend that if the communist party comes to power—I do not believe it ever will—it will come to power with the approval of the majority of the people of Canada. If it comes to power, this parliament will disappear; there will be no constitution, and there will be no parliament. My hon. friend is setting up a straw man to knock down and to frighten old ladies of both sexes. I apologize to the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mrs. Strum), who does not fall within the category either of being old or of being frightened.

My hon. friend brought forward some arguments other than from the constitutional point of view. He said that we were making an increase when economy demands perhaps even a decrease in the membership of this house. Perhaps it would be stating more nearly what he said to say that there are some people in the country who advocate a decrease in the membership of this house. The most important institution in this country is parliament. To my mind representation in this parliament is the most important privilege that the people of Canada have. If representation is to be

[Mr. Coldwell.]

adequate and real, then the members of this house must keep in close touch with their constituents. A decrease in the membership of the house would mean an enlarging of the size of the constituencies in some parts of Canada, which would militate against the democratic procedures of which we approve. So that argument surely was unworthy of the speech, fine in many respects, which my hon. friend has just made. Certainly it is not in accord with the desires and the wishes of the people of the part of Canada from which we both come. Delay until the next census? My hon. friend has argued to-day that we have to stand by the constitution. The constitution requires that a redistribution shall be made after every ten-year period. Then he rises in this house and urges the government to delay in carrying out the provisions of the constitution for another few years.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I never advocated such a thing. I said that there were those who said these things, but I was dealing with one particular thing. My hon. friend has placed words in my mouth that I never used.

Mr. COLDWELL: I am sorry if I misinterpreted my hon. friend but I think a good many members of this house must have found the same difficulty as I had in listening to him. I could not tell when he was reading quotations and when he was reading prepared parts of his speech. But if I have done him an injustice I regret it.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: Speaking of reading speeches, you are doing it right now.

Mr. COLDWELL: I am not reading my speech. I was just referring to notes I made while my hon. friend was speaking.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. I would remind all hon. members that they must address the chair.

Mr. COLDWELL: Mr. Speaker, I was referring to notes I made when my hon. friend was speaking.

It is true that there has been a serious loss of population in the western provinces and particularly in the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In 1941 this house gave approval to deferring redistribution in the hope that when the war ended and people had returned from the armed services and from industry to their home constituencies our population might have been recovered. I do not know whether it has or not. There is a quinquennial census in the west this year and the question whether our population has decreased or increased may be settled by that enumeration. But in fairness to other mem-