

Electoral Boundaries Commission

judicature in each of the provinces of Canada for the purpose of fixing boundaries, and that such a commission in so doing should consider the distribution of population and the public interest and convenience. That was the viewpoint placed before the house by the Conservative party of that day.

I am not going back to deal with the discussions that took place in successive redistributions. They have always been noted for warmth and acerbity and have not been of a nature as to elevate parliament in the thinking of the people. In 1947 a bill was brought in by the then prime minister, Right Hon. Mackenzie King, and the Progressive Conservative party took the stand then that there should be a non-partisan redistribution. During the course of my remarks in the house on July 15, 1947, I pointed out that Mr. Mackenzie King when he was in opposition in 1933 had stated: "Above all, there should be fairness in the matter of redistribution".

I might also point out that Mr. King stated this when speaking in the house in 1932:

I believe that the only true method of securing a representative parliament is by a system of proportional representation properly worked out with regard to the dominion as a whole. The reform should commence with the cities and the larger municipalities in our country. When the Liberal government was in office we introduced into this house a measure of proportional representation in connection with city constituencies. It was fought for some little time, there was considerable opposition from the then opposition and the measure was not proceeded with.

Then he stated:

It was not reintroduced because the government of the day had not a majority in the other chamber which would ensure its enactment, and there were more pressing matters requiring attention. I might add the late Liberal government did not have a majority in the Senate all the time it was in office. If we had had a majority in the other house upon which we could have relied we would have proceeded with our proportional representation measure.

That is just an observation of interest and of particular interest, of course, to the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate who, being engaged in writing Mr. King's memoirs, will find that a very interesting interlude. I also bring these words of Mr. King to the hon. member's attention and I do so in that spirit that is evidenced here this evening. I emphasize these words of Mr. King to the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate who has only recently been on a tour d'horizon to find out about election promises. He stopped that, though, when he got so many answers showing how many had been carried out.

Mr. Pickersgill: Does the Prime Minister wish to extend the scope of the debate to that subject?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I notice that the hon. gentleman has not said anything about it

since he got the answers. I want to bring these words of Mr. King to his attention:

If we are ever returned to power—

He was returned in 1935.

—a proportional representation measure will be a feature of the Liberal platform and program of legislation.

The hon. gentleman might add that to his list. To return once more from rather general remarks to the subject matter of the resolution, I stated on June 28, 1952, as found on page 3928 of *Hansard*:

The only reason we would want to retain it—

A system under which an independent commission would not be appointed.

—would be the political advantage of the party with the majority at the time. After all, the setting up of a commission will not remove from parliament the right and duty to determine the question once and for all. But, Mr. Speaker, the experience in Britain and elsewhere has been that when an independent commission speaks no parliament anywhere within this commonwealth has ever dared to alter the boundary lines of any constituency in a way which would have the result of liquidating a political opponent. In other words the commission system would provide a scientific means whereby redistribution would be determined on the only basis on which it should be determined, namely the question of population, subject of course in every case to these peculiar exigencies that occur in various constituencies where, by reason of the industrialization, the urban nature of a constituency, the rural nature of another, there has been recognized at all times the principle that population shall not be equal in all constituencies.

Now, sir, in 1952 we endeavoured to bring this about and not only did the Progressive Conservatives take this stand but the antecedents of the New Democratic party combined, without success, to press for the postponement of passage of the bill brought before the house until an independent commission had an opportunity to make the necessary reallocation of seats. The then leader of the opposition, the Hon. George Drew, said this as reported at page 3828 of *Hansard* for June 27, 1952:

—I am suggesting that the government consider introducing another bill—

That is, another after the bill to which I made reference earlier.

—which would set up a commission to carry out redistribution which then could be dealt with when this house reconvenes.

This did not receive any support from the members of the government of that day. Professor Robert MacGregor Dawson discussed in his book some of the proposals to give the power of redistribution to some more impartial body than a committee of parliament. He says this:

Thus Mr. Mackenzie King, in 1933 suggested a commission of six judges from different provinces—