

*Redistribution*

Laurent) made several references to Prince Edward Island. As a representative from that province, the cradle of confederation in Canada, I believe I am right when I say that our people in general are most apprehensive of any move whatsoever which would affect their representation in the parliament of Canada. In regard to our present representation, or even our present representatives, be they good or otherwise, the people from Prince Edward Island will say to the government, to parliament and to the Minister of Justice who introduced the resolution. *Ne touchez pas*.

Just because we are the smallest of the provinces in geographical area and in population, why should we be discredited, discriminated against and neglected? Since 1867 we have gained little from the confederation agreement that the four provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia made. Indeed, since we have not prospered in proportion to the larger and newer provinces in Canada, it is fair to say that we have lost much through joining this union. However we were coaxed into it. I am free to say that had the different governments of Canada since 1873 implemented the terms under which we entered the union, we would have to-day a population of more than 300,000 rather than a population which has declined since the time we entered confederation.

Why do I say we would have a population of 300,000? I say it because we have the best possible agricultural conditions of any province in Canada. Ours is the one province which has tried to hold its own without even the semblance of a square deal from the dominion. Admitting that my province is a small one, let me say that my constituents, and those of the whole province, did a splendid job during the war years through which we have just passed. We led the entire dominion in voluntary enlistments in the different armed forces, and supplied a type of soldier that had few equals, much less any superiors. Our farmers made a real contribution in the production of foodstuffs, working under great difficulties, and our fishermen likewise did their share in the work of producing food. We did not share, as did the other provinces, in the wealth brought to the working men because of war industry. We had no war-time houses, and we had no loans under the National Housing Act. Our average income was lower than that in other sections of the country.

A moment ago I said that our farmers produced foodstuffs for war; but what did our farmers and our labourers receive from this government? They did not receive even a thank you. On April 13 last they were handed a plaster of a twelve and a half per cent raise

[Mr McLure.]

in the price of farm machinery and they need to buy a good deal at this time. Furthermore, although the government said that they were going to increase the price of farm machinery they would not permit the farmers to raise the prices of their farm products and voted down a resolution to take the controls off those prices.

We in our province see in this redistribution bill a threat to our representation in parliament. The minister has given the assurance that at no time will the members in the Commons from Prince Edward Island be less than the number of senators from that province. Be that as it may be, the fact is that the minister cannot bind future governments or future parliaments any more than I can if this resolution goes through as it is. When the Minister of Justice was introducing this resolution, in the able speech he is so capable of making as one learned in the law he made this statement, as reported on page 1932 of *Hansard* of May 28:

The government has come to the conclusion to recommend to parliament the adoption of a petition to His Majesty to cause a bill to be laid before the parliament of the United Kingdom to provide for the repeal of section 51 of the British North America Act as it now stands . . .

The minister said, "The government has come to the conclusion." The cabinet, without the Prime Minister, must have arrived at that conclusion. Is it any wonder that a SOS call went out for the speedy return of the Prime Minister? During the war, one amendment—possibly two—was made to the British North America Act. That amendment was put through so swiftly that it opened the eyes of many people. They realized how precarious were the guarantees that the act provided, and it suggested also to the people the need for further consideration of this act, not as something that was rigid or unalterable but as something the alteration of which should require a greater measure of consultation with the provinces whose whole position depends upon the British North America Act.

It is true that there has been a prolonged and involved legal controversy as to just what constitutes Canadian federation. One group of lawyers hold the opinion that at confederation the original provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia actually surrendered their independence in order to create a body greater than themselves. Another group of lawyers contend that the essential basis of the confederation agreement was an intimate alliance rather than a submergence of local autonomies. I am not going to enter into the details of that legal controversy, except to say that for practical political pur-