

Let us be quite clear. It has been understood by all of us, I think, in the references that have been made to speeches in this house on earlier occasions, that no one has been quite able to understand how subsection 4 came to be introduced, except that, as Mr. Bennett said in one debate, apparently it was introduced for the purpose of protecting the rights of the maritime provinces.

There is the principle. It is representation by population, and at the present time it is not working out adequately, so that admittedly a way must be found to remedy the injustice under which the province of Quebec is suffering at the present time. We on this side of the house are just as anxious as any on the government side to see that injustice remedied at once. But we say that on balance the method by which the government in this resolution proposes to seek to remedy that injustice is unsound, and that on balance it is not such a resolution as ought to be supported until it has been first submitted to the provinces for their views.

No occasion arises in this debate for an attempt—and I saw traces of it in the remarks of one or two speakers—to try to set Ontario against Quebec or Quebec against Ontario. There is no occasion whatever for an attempt of that kind in this debate.

We on this side of the house say, in the first place, that this question is urgent, that it is important, and that it should be the subject of reference to the provinces. We have a dominion-provincial conference still pending, though not actually sitting at the moment, and that is the proper place where this matter should be raised for discussion.

There have been complaints about the necessity of going to Westminster for amendment of the British North America Act. Well, what is the use of complaining? We could have it otherwise if we wished. If there were some way in which agreement could be reached on this side of the water on a method of amending this constitution without reference to the parliament at Westminster, those who would be happiest would not be in this country; they would be the people at Westminster. They would be glad to be relieved of the necessity of passing special statutes from time to time at the request of Canada, to amend its constitution. When hon. members say, as the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Bridges) said this afternoon, that it was something in the nature of an oversight that some provision was not contained in the British North America Act for its amendment, I think they overlook the fact that this question must have been considered by the fathers of confederation. They had before them the

model of the American constitution, which had already been amended in a number of particulars. It was not because that problem was not before them that it was not dealt with in the act. They provided for the amendment of the provincial constitutions under subsection 1 of section 92, and it is perfectly obvious that the reason provision was not made in the British North America Act for the amendment of the constitution in relation to dominion rights is that the fathers of confederation could not go farther on the path of agreement. It is open to this country to have whatever other method it desires of amending its constitution, whenever it can agree on some constitutional method. That is a subject which ought to engage the attention of the dominion-provincial conference. We can have these conferences deal with financial questions; why can we not also have them deal with such important questions as have arisen during the course of this debate?

There were two arguments offered by the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent), as to which, with respect, I should like to say a word. In the first place, the minister says that the people of the provinces are represented in this parliament. Well, in a vague sense they are. But I want to make it perfectly clear that, speaking for myself, I do not come into this chamber representing a province. I have no mandate from the province of Ontario. I was elected to the parliament of Canada by a constituency in the province of Ontario. The number of seats in the province of Ontario happens to be fixed under the British North America Act in relation to the decennial census of 1931, but I do not claim to speak for the province of Ontario. I doubt very much if any member of this house is entitled to rise and say that he speaks for the province in which his constituency happens to be located. I say that nothing could be more completely divisive of national unity than such arguments. The man who speaks for the province of Quebec in matters affecting the affairs of that province is Premier Duplessis. The man who speaks for Ontario in matters pertaining to the affairs of that province is Premier Drew, and so on. It is not for those who sit in this chamber to usurp that role.

The other point made by the Minister of Justice was that this amendment does not concern the provinces, and that it has to do simply with that field of jurisdiction which, he says, belongs exclusively to the dominion. I take issue respectfully with the right hon. gentleman on that point. I think, if I may say so, he overlooks the fact that under section 51 representation is fixed according to