

under the crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, with a constitution similar in principle to that of the United Kingdom:

And whereas such a union could conduce to the welfare of the provinces and promote the interests of the British empire:

And whereas on the establishment of the union by authority of parliament it is expedient, not only that the constitution of legislative authority in the dominion be provided for, but also that the nature of the executive government therein be declared:

And whereas it is expedient that provision be made for the eventual admission into the union of other parts of British North America:

Be it therefore enacted and declared by the Queen's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

I do not need to emphasize the care that has been taken to establish as the basis of this constitution the agreement between the Canadian provinces.

Now, we come to section 51 of this act, which deals with the representation in this House of Commons. I deem it proper to cite here this section 51, familiar to everyone, but so important, in the course of a discussion like this, as to justify its being cited again:

On the completion of the census in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-one, and of each subsequent decennial census, the representation of the four provinces shall be readjusted by such authority, in such manner, and from such time, as the parliament of Canada from time to time provides, subject and according to the following rules:

1. Quebec shall have the fixed number of sixty-five members:

2. There shall be assigned to each of the other provinces such a number of members as will bear the same proportion to the number of its population (ascertained at such census) as the number sixty-five bears to the number of the population of Quebec (so ascertained):

3. In the computation of the number of members for a province a fractional part not exceeding one half the whole number requisite for entitling the province to a member shall be disregarded; but a fractional part exceeding one half of that number shall be equivalent to the whole number:

4. On any such readjustment the number of members for a province shall not be reduced unless the proportion which the number of population of the province bore to the number of the aggregate population of Canada at the then last preceding readjustment of the number of members for the province is ascertained at the then latest census to be diminished by one twentieth part or upwards:

5. Such readjustment shall not take effect until the termination of the then existing parliament.

Now if we come to examine the actual representation in the House of Commons in the light of this section, we come to the following conclusion: We have now 245 members divided as follows: Prince Edward Island,

4; British Columbia, 16; Saskatchewan, 21; Nova Scotia, 12; Manitoba, 17; Ontario, 82; New Brunswick, 10; Alberta, 17; Yukon, 1; Quebec, 65.

If we had an exact proportional representation, as no doubt it was intended to establish at the time of confederation, we should have at the present time the following number of representatives for each province: Prince Edward Island, 2; British Columbia, 16; Saskatchewan, 17; Nova Scotia, 11; Manitoba, 14; Ontario, 74; New Brunswick, 9; Alberta, 16; Yukon, 1; Quebec, 65. That is to say, a total of 225.

But, pursuant to the fourth paragraph of section 51, and also to the amendment of the constitution of 1915, the number of representatives must be as follows: Prince Edward Island, 4; British Columbia, 16; Saskatchewan, 17; Nova Scotia, 12; Manitoba, 14, Ontario, 82; New Brunswick, 10; Alberta, 17; Yukon, 1; Quebec, 65. That is to say, a total of 238.

The first conclusions that one must draw from the figures I just gave is that the citizens of this country are not on the same footing as regards the representation in the House of Commons. This constitutes an injustice and is contrary to the basis of responsible government and democratic system. One may ask himself if the fathers of confederation acted wisely when they inserted in the constitution this fourth paragraph of section 51.

I am bound to come to the conclusion that, in this matter as in many others, it is always the province of Quebec that must suffer from such conditions. However, I personally believe and, according to the general opinion of the people of the province of Quebec, I can state that we are ready to abide by this disposition of the law. On this point, like on any other, we do not demand more than that the law be respected, but we insist upon this. That is why I took it upon myself as a duty at the beginning of this first session of a new parliament to place on the order paper the resolution that is now before the house. I do not intend to go all over what was said during the debate of July 1943, when the amendment to the constitution was adopted by this house, as I am of the opinion that the whole question was fully disposed of at the time. I must, however, for the sake of full comprehension of my argument, refer to the resolution itself, which reads as follows:

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty:

Most Gracious Sovereign

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Canada in parliament assembled, humbly approach Your Majesty, praying that you may graciously be pleased to