

Redistribution Commission

of the area which in my view a member of parliament should provide if he is going to be a good member of parliament. This does not mean that I make personal contact with anything other than a percentage of the people, but at least I attempt to place myself in a position where the people of the area have the opportunity to see me, talk to me and present their views. I do so because, as I see it, it is part of my duty when I come here representing these people to bring to the house the views I have gathered during discussions with those I represent. I submit that anything less than that would be short of what my true function as a member of parliament must be.

Having in mind the impetus which has been given to northern development—I hope hon. members will not think I am being too partisan if I refer to some of the measures passed under the last government—this district will acquire another 20,000 to 25,000 people in a comparatively short time. There is bound to be a division. Yet as I see the situation, if specific and inflexible rules are laid down requiring that population shall be the main criterion as to the size of a constituency, it may well be that a division cannot be arranged which will permit the true representation that the area should have.

It is my submission that, apart from anything else that has been said, some attempt should be made to introduce, in addition to the criterion of population and the tolerance which would go with it, a measure which would provide that, subject to certain set, specific conditions being present, a member may be returned from an area with less than the minimum population referred to in the legislation. I think you would have to provide very specifically what those conditions were. I do not think such a provision could be allowed to be used improperly or injudiciously, but I do feel this suggestion might well provide an answer to some of the views which have been expressed by some of the members during the course of the debate.

I think there is a precedent for this, Mr. Chairman. The government has just concluded a conference with the 10 provinces. During the course of and following these discussions certain new views have been advanced as to payments to certain provinces on the basis of equalization. It is my understanding that in this unique experiment of building a nation from sea to sea in the northern part of this continent, which is subject to such tremendous variations in geography and economy, we have established the equalization principle in order to provide a measure of equality and to iron out these differences. Without that we would not have a viable nation. I submit that the same

[Mr. Baldwin.]

principle of equalization might well be applied to the question of representation.

I appreciate the problem of those members who represent constituencies with tremendously large populations. Their problem is a very difficult one. I do not for one minute attempt to minimize it, but I think there is at least a homogeneity to their representation which is of advantage to them and, more important, permits their constituents to have access to them. This is not always apparent in the case of rural constituencies.

What will be the ultimate result if we should carry through to its logical conclusion the principle of representation by population? As I see it, we would ultimately find in Canada not only 10 provinces but, superimposed upon those 10 provinces, some 10 or 12 or 14 large city states. These city states would probably control two thirds to three quarters of the representation in the House of Commons. This in turn would attract a concentration of power into the hands of these city states which I think would add immeasurably to the complexity of governing this country. Hon. members are familiar with the old principle as expressed by one southern senator, "Them that has gits". Having in mind human nature, which all of us recognize is a factor, large cities with a large membership in the house would inevitably in due course be able to provide greater and greater benefits for these large centres of population through legislation which they would be able to control. If this should happen I believe the inevitable result would be the breakdown of the country as we see it.

There may be hon. members who feel I am too far fetched in projecting my thoughts to this ultimate conclusion but I do not think so. I think this is very likely to happen. Therefore in my view any measure of redistribution affecting the membership of the house should take into consideration the vital fact that there should be a measure of representation which is not necessarily consistent with population but is consistent with the proper growth of the country. To that end I suggest that those who have spoken, and I understand and appreciate the sentiments which motivated them, for a rigid yardstick of population with a very small tolerance are, in the final analysis, doing a disservice to this country.

Mr. Pickersgill: If I might be permitted to say a word at this point, Mr. Chairman, I have the impression that it is not the disposition of the committee to carry the resolution this evening. I have no criticism whatever to make of that. Perhaps it might be helpful to have a little consultation outside the house before we go on with this particular matter.