

British North America Act

to make a comparison between York-Scarborough and Iles-de-la-Madeleine because in one constituency in one province you have 11,000 people and in the other in another you have 180,000 or 210,000. However, in Ontario, in contrast there is a constituency which has a population of 28,000 and which has a member in this house. This situation is fine under these peculiar circumstances, but surely we have to come at this whole problem, when you see a discrepancy such as that, with the idea of making the representation fair and just on the basis of population.

The distribution of seats as between the provinces is relatively automatic, although there have been some changes and it has caused some small trouble. The people from the maritimes will say something about it because the maritimes have felt they have suffered and will suffer more. If you project the figures for redistribution you find that Nova Scotia is going to lose a seat, and perhaps the members from Nova Scotia will perk up their ears at that statement. It looks as though Newfoundland may lose a seat. New Brunswick is safe with a senatorial floor of ten and Prince Edward Island is safe with a senatorial floor of four. These facts illustrate why this issue is charged with dynamite in this session. Saskatchewan, if we continue with the present rules, is going to lose three seats in the next redistribution. One must remember the power we have in this house from Saskatchewan in the Prime Minister and one cabinet minister.

There are the reasons why I say this redistribution issue is going to be before parliament for the next four years. British Columbia is going to gain a seat, while Quebec is going to lose one. Alberta will perhaps gain one or two, and Manitoba is going to lose one. This means you are going to see quite a change in 1962 because of the rural-urban shift which has been extraordinary in the past few years. This problem should concern every member of parliament, and I hope that in the debate that ensues on this bill everyone will take a nonpartisan stand. Whether you believe it or not, that is the essence of redistribution. Even though there has been some partisanship and gerrymandering, the matter is supposedly decided in the House of Commons on a nonpartisan basis.

My idea, of course, is that this amendment will open up the way for an independent commission to undertake the task. Of course, this independent commission will have to be given a certain set of principles under which it should work, and of course parliament will have to do that. The independent commission would have to bring in a report to parliament for approval. The Prime Minister pointed out

quite clearly in 1953 and 1947 that other countries of the commonwealth have found an independent commission worked very well. If any hon. members on the government side want to look up his speeches, they are to be found in volume 4, 1952 and in volume 6, 1947. I think, actually, the Prime Minister has been as eloquent a spokesman for the independent commission as anyone in this house.

I must confess that the former member for Port Arthur shrugged off the whole matter, saying the people do not care. The present Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) took the former member to task with his favourite phrases such as "abundantly clear", or "glaringly obvious", stressing the fact that he was strongly in favour of an independent commission taking this whole question out of the area of a backbiting, impulsive and grasping parliament. Since redistribution almost always is considered towards the end of a parliament, with the tremendous rush to get things through, the problem is never solved satisfactorily. I am recommending these proposals for study now because if we do refer the bill, as I would like, to the special committee on elections, then a study of the proposals should be made and by the end of this year or early next year some progress could be made towards the establishment of an independent commission. The organization would be ready, with principles established on how it is to operate by 1962 when the census results will begin to be known. These proposals, of course, are along the lines of the recommendations made by the Prime Minister when he was in opposition. I think, as a matter of fact, I should refer to some of the things he said. In *Hansard* of July 15, 1947, at page 5644, he said:

In 1933 the Prime Minister—
that is Mr. Bennett.

—pointed out the unfairness of leaving a measure like this to the end of the session. Presumably there was a desire to have the session closed at the earliest possible date, and the debate continued for four or five days. The Prime Minister on that occasion used certain words which I wish to adopt now. He pointed out that coming in at the end of the session and introducing a measure such as this is unfair and indicates a desire to eliminate members of opposing parties without enabling them to place their position before the house and the country.

Now, in 1952 the hon. member for Eglinton expressed the idea that something had to be done because if another government with a big majority were in control in 1962, we would continue with the old way. I think at the time the hon. member for Eglinton was afraid the big government in control would be a Liberal government. Of course, the situation has changed so that perhaps now we