

*Redistribution Commission*

this particular matter. It seems very unfair if we are talking about—

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I wonder if I could ask the hon. gentleman to put his question again very carefully because I am not sure I got the purport of it properly?

**Mr. Fisher:** At the present time, New Brunswick—

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I understand the situation; it is the question I did not get.

**Mr. Fisher:** If we increase the number of seats, obviously those provinces are not going to get any of the increase. They are set; they are protected with the floor underneath them; but their relative influence, of course, is going to diminish. I would not expect that they would quarrel about this, but I suggest that they might have made some kind of criticism.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Well, what is the antecedent of "they"? Is the hon. gentleman suggesting the proposition that we should consult with provincial governments about the redistribution of membership in this house? I think that is a novel proposition, and I had never thought of embarking upon it. I do not think we should.

**Mr. Fisher:** It is not that novel. It has been made in almost every debate on redistribution. I feel that the Senate floor is based upon the promises given these provinces when they came in. Let us be realistic about this. The minister knows that Prince Edward Island looks upon this as an article of confederation.

Now, has Prince Edward Island, for example, made any protests or has the government sounded them out as to what their views would be? I am thinking here, not of the government alone but also such people as the Solicitor General. This is one point. The second point relates to it.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I should like to answer, if the hon. gentleman would permit me. With regard to party, I think Prince Edward Island is very ably represented in this house, and I think the people who are elected to this house to represent Prince Edward Island are perfectly capable of speaking for Prince Edward Island on this subject. I would not think of consulting anyone else but those people about Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. Fisher:** I am very pleased to have that assurance from the hon. gentleman. Now, let us look at this from the other point of view. As long as we have this floor, the whole relationship will be thrown out of context or thrown out of balance. Given this marvelous representation from Prince Edward Island, has the minister had any discussion with his colleagues from those places that have a floor to the effect that, instead of

increasing the number of seats in the parliament of Canada, some approach be made to those particular provinces that are over-represented on the basis of population, from the point of view of accepting a voluntary reduction in their representation?

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I suggest the hon. member should put that question to the hon. members for Queens.

**Mr. Fisher:** I am just shocked that the minister is really converting this debate into a wide open, irresponsible discussion upon a measure introduced by him and by the government. Whether the minister will acknowledge it or not, and I do not suppose he will because he knows it is a rather touchy subject, this is an important consideration in this whole matter. There has been a lot of talk about the comparison of York-Scarborough, with 200,000 people with Prince Edward Island which has less than 100,000, and yet has four seats. This is part of the anomaly of representation by population.

One of the things that is quite apparent, when you look at the rules for sharing seats amongst the provinces, is that you now have some subtracted from the 265 and you are down to 247 before you get your divisors. I imagine that very soon, judging by the relationship of the population of Nova Scotia to the rest of the country, this is going to drop even further, perhaps down to 237. Then, the divisor throws things away out of kilter. As a matter of fact, if the extremes of population movement to certain portions continues, it is quite conceivable that we will be having "rep. by pop." for about three provinces, and all the rest will be protected by some kind of floor.

I am not advocating here that we do away with the floor, but I want to know what thinking the government has done on this problem as a means of getting out of increasing the number of seats. Every hon. member in this house knows that increasing the number of seats will let us off the hook. But it really does not do much in terms of getting better representation for the people in the country; and it really does not do much about meeting the fact that the old rules, including the Senate floor, are making a monkey out of "rep. by pop." I think it is just something the government might have considered because, like many other hon. members, I am not an enthusiast for seeing the membership in this house increased. I tend to agree with the hon. member for Edmonton West on that. It may well give some advantage in getting a quorum in the house, or in some of the committees of the house, but that is about the only advantage I can see in it. I hope, having