

Redistribution Commission

in our constituencies. Sometimes we may even think we have almost a proprietary right to them, and after we get comfortably situated in a constituency, especially if we keep on getting elected, all of us feel that having new areas added to which we will have to go around and spread our charm, would constitute a strain we would rather avoid. However, the constitutional obligation is here, and I think all of us should remember that, whether they live in our own constituencies or not, no one can vote in this country who is not a Canadian elector.

It is our duty to treat all the people of this country equally, so far as we can, and if we really mean what we profess about self-government, then roughly each of them should have an equal voice in this house, which has the responsibility for overseeing the government of our country.

The House of Commons is supposed to be a mirror of the population. At present we all know it is a somewhat distorted mirror, and when I say that I am not reflecting on any hon. member. Under the constitution we all have a duty to replace the distorted mirror by a mirror which will better and more fairly reflect the whole population. That is what a redistribution is for; that is what it means; that is what this task is. It is, as I said earlier, a task which imposes a collective responsibility on all of us and in which each of us has an equal share. I do not think the right hon. gentleman or I have any more responsibility than any other hon. member for this task, except that we have certain positions the house has given us. I may say that the government hopes for and invites a co-operative effort in this difficult task.

Since this parliament came into being last May we have heard quite a lot about what is called the image of parliament. I think a lot of what we have heard and read about it is a rather distorted mirror too; but then I am probably biased, and probably some of the rest of the hon. members are, too. I think when we look back at the end of this year at what this parliament will have achieved, we will have no particular reason to apologize to anyone.

I have never apologized to anyone and never intend to, for being partisan in this parliament, because party is the essence of parliamentary government. It is what saves us from having dictatorship. If we do not believe in our parties and what they stand for, and if we do not uphold them, then we are not doing our job. That is why we can have peaceful change under the parliamentary system, instead of having to shoot the head of a government when we do not like him. Happily we do not have to do that.

We have another method. Perhaps it is not altogether unpainful. It may leave a few scars, but it also leaves an opportunity for recovery. It gives the people a chance to make up their minds, to change their minds, to change them again, and even perchance to change them still again.

Neither do I think that parliament should always be a model of decorum. If we are going to feel seriously about these things, then there are going to be times when we are going to behave in a way that perhaps some of us would like to undo when we think about it later in the day, or early next morning; but by then it is too late. We are human beings; we are engaged in an activity in which sometimes we are seeking to reconcile differences, and at other times seeking to make those differences as great as possible because we believe good will come from making them as great as possible. That is part of the normal activity of parliament, and I think there has been a lot of talk by people who perhaps have not appreciated that, even in the great parliaments, all was not a model of decorum.

Sir, I will be breaking the rules when I say this, but perhaps you will let me. I was very much impressed the other day when the right hon. gentleman said, in the debate when we were setting up the committee on procedure, that all was not peaceful in this chamber in the days of Borden and Laurier, in the days of Tupper and in the days of Macdonald, and that perhaps on balance there are better manners and better behaviour in parliament today than there were in a great part of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Nicholson: We were not here.

Mr. Pickersgill: As my hon. friend reminds me, we were not in this house then. Fortunately there are a lot of books appearing at present in which we can read about those days. That is a good thing. In saying that, I hasten to add it is not an advertisement for my own book.

But here, sir, we have a different kind of task. We have a task that the government is trying to approach, and which I believe the right hon. gentleman and the government he headed were trying to approach a year ago, in an entirely different spirit. Here is a task about which there need not and should not be any partisan differences.

I do not think any hon. member in his heart, no matter what party he belongs to, thinks we should try to win elections by rigging the machinery. I think we should try to win elections by putting our causes before the people and making sure the people have a fair chance to register their opinions fairly and honestly. That, sir, is the spirit in which we are approaching this matter.