

British North America Act

and, after the matter has been discussed with the federal government, if there is need for an amendment, it will be brought about but, of course, with the agreement and the approval of the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, to show that I disapprove of this bill, I have quoted the words of great Liberal leaders of the past who stated in this house that no amendment should be made to the British North America Act before consultation with the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that the federal government should insist on setting up a commission whose function would be to study the readjustment of the representation in the House of Commons.

As far as my constituency is concerned, Mr. Speaker, I should like to express this wish: I would like it to be kept as it is: one of the finest. Of course, it is one of the largest in the country but, just the same, I should like it to remain as it is, since I had the honour of being a candidate there and while the former member, Mr. Breton, had been elected with a majority of 15,200 votes, the people of my constituency gave me one of 6,372. For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I should like to express the very legitimate wish of keeping my constituency intact although it is one of the largest in the country.

I am opposed, therefore, to this bill, because it is at variance with fundamental principles; if the Canadian constitution is to be modified some day, it would be logical and indispensable that the provinces be consulted.

(Text):

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the bill introduced by the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher). I appreciate the remarks made by the hon. member whose constituency I cannot recall, and I would have liked to know exactly what was said by the hon. member who has just taken his seat. All I can say is:—and I apologize for the way I say it—*Monsieur l'Orateur, je ne peux pas parler français.* I understand that he opposes the bill.

This bill is not only an interesting one but it is one which is required in our country. The hon. member who spoke prior to the last speaker said that it was taking away the power of parliament. It is doing no such thing. It is asking that as far as the establishment of voting rights of constituencies are concerned it shall be determined on a non-political basis.

[Mr. Pigeon.]

An hon. Member: Is that not the way it is done now?

Mr. Winch: The hon. member does not fully realize what he said. I have had the honour now of being a member of this House of Commons for only five years. Prior to that I was 20 years in the legislature of British Columbia and in that 20 years I was twice named as a member of a redistribution bill committee. I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and all hon. members, that of all the committees convened by parliament the dirtiest and the rottenest and the most difficult to be on is the redistribution bill committee, and I have been on one twice in British Columbia. You can be as altruistic as you like; you can be as eloquent, sir, as they want to be on the other side of the house, I am telling you that the dirtiest, rottenest job that a man in parliament can have is to be a member of a redistribution bill committee.

An hon. Member: You said that.

Mr. Winch: I said it and I am repeating it.

Yes, you can even be a C.C.F. member, and it is a rotten job, because as a member of parliament and a member of the committee you have the job of outlining the area of constituencies; the number of voters in constituencies and how many members there shall be—it is hell. I know it. Do not tell me that it is not the same on the federal basis as it is on the provincial. Irrespective of your party representation you are, first of all, faced with a committee that has to work out the representation on a logical basis. As a member of the committee you want to protect you own constituency and your own party. As soon as the committee submits its first report, then every member of every party comes to members of the committee and wants changes made here and there. Let us be honest, you should know this is a fact.

The hon. member spoke about gerrymandering. Of course, any time you have a parliamentary committee that has to deal with the breaking up of constituencies and the realignment of constituencies, there is gerrymandering. Surely, that is what we all should want to get away from. We do in the C.C.F., and we hope the government and official opposition do too. The only way this can be accomplished is to have the work done by a committee, completely outside of parliament.

Is there anyone in this House of Commons who would dare stand in his place and say