

*The Address—Mr. H. J. Flemming*

member for Parry Sound-Muskoka they should explain to this house the absence of any provision for survivor benefits under the Canada pension plan, the absence of any benefits for persons over 65 who have retired or who will retire before the legislation receives royal assent, and the absence of any benefits for the sick and disabled, the unemployed, the single woman at home, the self employed with limited income, and the casual labourer. What do members opposite say to the charge of the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka that more than 80 per cent of Canadians will not be covered at all? I am sure that the government and those representing it now on the front benches will find it necessary to take some notice of these representations.

To me it seems the announcement in the speech from the throne concerning contributory pensions contained one word which should not have been there. That is the word "comprehensive". It should be replaced, I suggest, by the word "incomprehensible", because there is nothing comprehensive about the proposals in the Canada pension plan. I suggest it is incomprehensible that any government should have the temerity to make use of the word "comprehensive" when only 20 per cent of the people of Canada are covered by the plan. That is very far from being comprehensive. We shall await with interest further word about this pension plan.

Now I wish to express an opinion with respect to what rumour says is contemplated by the government in connection with the fixing of the boundaries of new electoral districts. We in New Brunswick are now at our minimum as far as total seats are concerned. There may be internal rearrangement, but our total representation of ten seats is fixed.

I was impressed by, and find myself in agreement with, the observations of the hon. member for Cariboo a few days ago. He drew a comparison between urban and rural constituencies. I find many problems reach my desk from the rural constituency of Victoria-Carleton, problems which generally speaking do not exist to anything like the same extent in urban ridings. Questions of geography and distance also enter the picture. I urge the government to allow a very generous percentage degree of population difference between rural and urban ridings. I would particularly press the opinion that the realization of ultimate aims and objects be approached step by step rather than that an attempt be made to rearrange boundaries in too drastic a fashion at one fell swoop. Changes should be made in the light of changing conditions as they occur from time to time.

[Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton).]

To try to effect an improvement which would solve all the difficulties immediately and permanently would be, in my opinion, to attempt the impossible. The changes should be made as the need occurs, and they should be made in stages.

My opinion is that the difference between urban and rural constituencies should be something in the order of 33½ per cent, over or under, depending on size, density of population, the population itself, highways, communications and other salient features, including natural, well established and long established associations between communities. Suppose, for example, that one community has a shopping centre. People have gone that way to buy what they need, and so have their fathers before them, and their grandfathers. Any attempt to alter or ignore this pattern by immediate or abrupt action would be both unwise and unjust.

I was pleased to note the emphasis placed on the subject of national unity by the hon. member who spoke immediately before the hon. member for Lafontaine. A great deal has been said about national unity by hon. members opposite during this debate. I say to them that the Conservative party has always stood and acted for national unity. That is our record. Our policy in this regard was, I believe inadvertently, enunciated by the Minister of National Revenue a few days ago when he said, in answer to a question regarding the collection of income tax, that his department had "one policy for Canada". That is our party's national policy for this great country, "One policy for all Canada". I listened to the eloquent speech of my hon. friend from Three Rivers (Mr. Balcer) the other day. I pay a great deal of attention to him; he is ever sincere and never devious. He stated that we needed a direct, frank and definite dialogue between the two great founding races of our country and other Canadians. He stated that Canada should know what is the complaint of Quebec and what they want exactly. He was quick to acknowledge the progress that had been made and the happy results in many fields.

He mentioned that the standard of living of the average Quebecker is 10 per cent below the national average and 28 per cent below the average for Ontario. He mentioned the economic activity of 5 per cent compared with the population of 29 per cent. He mentioned that French Canadians in Quebec make up 82.6 per cent of the population but in actual management have only 10 per cent and hold only 20 per cent of the key positions. He stated that the 1963 average per capita income was \$1,700 as against \$2,000 in Ontario and \$2,600 in the United States.