

Electoral Boundaries Commissions

increased in the rest of the province. For all that, those constituencies remained static. For instance, there are constituencies like Compton, Brome, Missisquoi and a few others, a dozen constituencies where the population is far less than in other constituencies.

At this time a redistribution is being made in the province of Quebec, and those constituencies are not affected, because it was so provided by the British North America Act to protect an English minority, to guarantee them a number of constituencies in the province of Quebec. This was readily accepted by the French Canadians at that time because it has always been a point of honour for them to protect minorities and, in many cases, to give them all the security and protection required.

Now, today, there is an immigration trend which may cause changes and, no doubt, an increase of population in certain parts of the country. Even if the increase in the population of the province of Quebec was quite steady, it is not equal to that which took place in other areas of the country. I therefore have a suggestion to make—and I want to indicate to each and everyone that I do not intend to propose an amendment—but I wonder if the government should not propose an amendment and have it supported by the official opposition, for, at that moment, it would be much appreciated by everybody, for the purpose of stating, on item 12, that over a total of 265, or perhaps of 300 in 20 years, or 400 in 50 years after all there are 650 seats for 50 million people in England, we could number 50 million inhabitants in 30 years and there would perhaps be 600 members in the house, people would be somewhat crowded, but it does not matter—that the province of Quebec maintain always the same percentage of members. The Minister of Transport indicated a while ago that I have visited several parliaments in Europe. In fact, I visited that of London, which is twice as small as ours and where 600 members or more are crowded in an area which represents half that of our own House of Commons; therefore, would it not be possible for the province of Quebec to have always the same proportion of members, whatever the number of members sitting in the house, that is always the ratio of 75 to 265, which makes about 30 per cent? The same proportion would remain, whatever might be the additions made to the number of members forming the house.

Then the only French Canadian province would be sure it would always have at least a minimum representation in the House of

[Mr. Grégoire.]

Commons of this country. I wonder whether the Minister of Transport would be ready to accept such a suggestion, because the principle was accepted at the time of the drafting of the British North America Act. Such a principle was accepted for the counties with an English speaking majority in the province of Quebec, and this was written into the British North America Act. Would it not be possible today to make this electoral change and give exactly the same guarantee to the province of Quebec, to the effect that it will always have the same proportional representation it has today, that is 30 per cent. I think that this might remove some of the apprehensions which many Quebeckers have.

I will not move an amendment in that connection, but this is a suggestion and it will rest upon the government and the Minister of Transport to present this as an amendment if they deem it advisable. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) would be well chosen to second such an amendment and it would be accepted unanimously by the house.

This is a principle which has been accepted and which would be very much appreciated by all the people of the province of Quebec. That is a suggestion I wanted to make concerning section 12. I wonder whether the minister would not comment in that regard or, better still, present the amendment.

[Text]

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, if I followed the hon. gentleman correctly, he is suggesting that we should attempt in this bill to amend the rules set out in section 51 of the British North America Act. I do not think it would be within the scope of this bill to do that. If we felt it was desirable to amend the rules which are laid down in the constitution for the apportionment of seats between provinces—

Mr. Knowles: Among, please.

Mr. Pickersgill: —among provinces; I am always glad to see what a conservative the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is in matters of language—if we attempted to revise those rules, we ought to do it by a separate bill which would amend the British North America Act for that purpose.

Though it is not strictly in order, perhaps I might recall to the minds of hon. members who were here—and perhaps it will be of interest to those who were not here—at the time the present provisions for the disposition