

*British North America Act*

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I think the articles and the references that hon. members will find in *Hansard* as a result of this will open up the topic very much to them.

The second part of the information which I have sent to each member gives the statistics for all the constituencies in Canada as they exist at the present time, province by province, with their areas in square miles and the number of electors in 1957; that is, the 1957 general election, the population in 1956, the population in 1951 and the last time each constituency was changed. The reason for giving the three population figures is to give some idea of the growth, and how some constituencies are going through tremendous growth while others are not but, as a matter of fact, are retrogressing. The point about giving the figures for electors is to let hon. members see that the relationship between the number of electors and the population is not a constant thing in all constituencies in Canada.

I do not believe that the number of electors is the factor to work on in considering how big a constituency should be. My reason for that is that with the tremendous growth in the responsibilities of the federal government, it is the population that counts. For example, you can quite often have immigrants who do not have Canadian citizenship and the right to vote, or even children, giving you more work to do as a member of parliament than electors, and therefore I think the argument, that population rather than electors is one of the most important things to keep to the fore in determining how many people there should be in a constituency, is valid. It should be by population and not by the number of electors.

[Mr. Fisher.]

The argument in connection with redistribution has to be presented historically; that is, you have to go back and look at the thing from the beginning in order to really appreciate it. An expert on this particular facet of our parliamentary life, aside from the chief electoral officer who knows a great deal about it, is a professor from Saskatchewan by the name of Norman Ward. Perhaps I should give one brief quotation from his great book which is called, "The Canadian House of Commons":

A debate on redistribution reveals parliament at its worst.

Unfortunately, that is true, and the reason is that redistribution affects every one of us or can affect every one of us. We all have an interest in this problem, whereas almost every other bill that comes before the house may represent a mere party decision to us. Redistribution represents the only occasion upon which all members are interested in the subject under discussion. I think this is a problem that should interest every member in the house, and that is one of the main reasons why I have put forward so many statistics. This enables each member to ascertain how his constituency compares with other constituencies in his area, whether he is above the mean or below the mean in terms of population. The statistics also give him an idea how his constituency compares in area.

The mean figure in the 1962 redistribution will probably be somewhere between 64,000 and 66,000 people. If your constituency is above that, perhaps it needs a readjustment. If it is below, there may be need for amalgamation or something else should be done to adjust the balance.

I have a number of proposals that I want to make, but perhaps a little quotation from one of the most vitriolic tongues the North American continent has ever had, that of H. L. Mencken, on the point would be appropriate. He said:

The yokels hang on because old apportionments give them unfair advantages. The vote of a malarious peasant on the lower eastern shore counts as much as the votes of 12 Baltimoreans. But that can't last. It is not only unjust and undemocratic; it is absurd.

You could say the same thing about a situation in which the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. McGee) represents people whose vote is worth about 1/17 or 1/18 of the habitants of the Iles-de-la-Madeleine constituency. One point that needs to be made in connection with redistribution is that the problem has to be settled within the boundaries of a province. It is, therefore, unfair