

Redistribution Commission

for me to complete my statement at this time. I shall attempt not to trespass unduly on the time of the committee.

Mr. Knowles: It is a very important subject.

Mr. Pickersgill: It is very important, there is no doubt about that. It is the very foundation of our system of government and nothing we could be considering could be more important.

Now, in general, what is suggested in this measure is representation by population. There are departures, of course, from the strict principle of representation by population. There is no thought of interfering with the representation by separate members of the two territories. I mention two territories, but we may possibly have three territories, and in that case I think we would still envisage what is now called the Northwest Territories being represented by one member. There is no thought of changing the senatorial floor provided in the constitution which, at the present time, protects the representation of the provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. One of the most agonizing problems in the whole of redistribution, of which we are all aware, is the problem of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

As all hon. members know the population of Manitoba in recent years has grown much more rapidly than the population of Saskatchewan. At the time of the 1961 census, if my memory serves me correctly, Saskatchewan had only about 5,000 more people than Manitoba. I believe an estimate made in June of this year indicated that Manitoba had about 20,000 more people than Saskatchewan. Practically speaking, one has to say that the two provinces have equal populations. I do not think there are any other circumstances connected with the two provinces which would justify any of us in feeling that when they are equal in population they should have equal representation. It seems to me that that is a valid proposition. I know this is not going to be a very easy thing to accept in Saskatchewan.

I had some little experience, before I was a member of the house, with the problem that faced Saskatchewan when the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam was the premier. After the war, there was the hope and expectation that the growth of Saskatchewan, which had been somewhat arrested by the war, would resume on a very rapid scale. Certain special measures were taken, which I have never regretted and which I always thought were justified, to ameliorate that situation in the post-war redistributions. We are faced now with the fact that Manitoba and Saskatchewan are equal in population

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

and I think all of us feel only one conclusion could reasonably be drawn from that fact.

We are also aware of the fact that Alberta and British Columbia are, at the moment, quite substantially under-represented in this house. These provinces are a long way from Ottawa and there is certainly no argument for their being under-represented, if that can be corrected. We are also aware of the fact that ever since confederation, in nearly every part of Canada, the rural population has been represented by more members than the urban population. I echo the words of the right hon. gentleman a year ago when he said he did not think that could be entirely departed from. I noted with some interest, as I am sure other hon. members did, a speech made not long ago by a distinguished former member in this house who is now the lieutenant governor of Ontario on this particular point. I feel confident that any commission, taking account of our history, taking account of our background, would feel that in the tolerances they would have to allow—

Mr. Diefenbaker: What did the lieutenant governor say?

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps on a later occasion I could get that. I would not like to paraphrase it, but the gist of it was that the disparity in representation was not likely to continue on the scale on which it now exists. This was the point. I would rather use his own words, and perhaps it was a mistake to even mention the statement without having it under my hand.

Mr. Winkler: There were some very good members in that group.

Mr. Pickersgill: Of course I do not conceal from the older hon. members—it would be useless if I tried—that I was brought up on a homestead in the bush in northern Manitoba and I may have a slight rural bias myself. It is also well known there is no town of more than 4,000 people in my riding, and possibly that might create a slight bias in my mind—I hope not too great a bias—but I know too that some very distinguished members have been elected to this house from some of the great Canadian cities, notably the city of Winnipeg, and I would not like to see that municipality unduly under-represented in the house. We all know the great burden borne by the hon. member for Edmonton West in representing that huge and growing constituency.

Neither do I conceal from the house that probably all of us in our hearts would secretly like to leave the whole thing alone if we could, and if it were not our duty to do something about it. All of us probably tend to have a somewhat proprietary interest