

Redistribution

to time yesterday and again today that this system is perfectly all right. We had not heard that argument for some time; we had, in fact, heard the contrary argument from Liberal members of the house, both in the house and out of it. That argument was made, of course, at a time when the problem of redistribution was not before us.

This is not a new subject of discussion. As has been said before, no one here claims any originality in putting forward the argument for a better, a more impartial method of redistributing the seats so that the people of Canada, not the members of this parliament, will have the best and most satisfactory form of representation. In approaching that question of course we must not disregard the personal factors involved here in the House of Commons, particularly when an unsatisfactory method is being employed to make it difficult for some of those members to return. I do not know how long before that this subject was raised, but it was raised with great earnestness in the house as long ago as 1892; that is 60 years ago. On that occasion a man who later became chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada—I refer to Louis H. Davies—speaking in the Canadian House of Commons, expressed the opinion that parliament should “agree on fair and just principles on which to frame a bill”. Then outlining his own opinion as to how such a bill should be framed, he said the redistribution should—

... have an authority outside the house to apply these principles to the country at large.

Mr. McLure: He represented Queens county.

Mr. Drew: It is pointed out to me that it was natural that he should have expressed such wise and sound opinions because he represented Queens county. They were wise and sound opinions. Unfortunately opinions of that kind have been expressed over and over again but have not been acted upon. Yes, I admit without any hesitation that members of the Conservative party have expressed those opinions and have failed to carry them out on earlier occasions. This is not something any of us should approach in the spirit of the kind of political badgering that was adopted by the Minister of Agriculture this afternoon. The question simply is whether the high hopes expressed by the Prime Minister when this subject was first under discussion were a real expression of the desire of this government, or whether that was simply a statement that was made as window dressing, with every indication of going ahead with the exact course that has been followed. In any event we have the words of the Minister of Agriculture that leave no doubt that there was

direction in regard to the cynical gerrymandering of Lake Centre, with the effect of greatly prejudicing the position of one of the outstanding members of this parliament and one of the outstanding men in public life today.

Not one word has been said on the other side of the house which in any way lessens the strength of that comment which has been made, and made with every justification, more than once already. What doubt can there be, after listening to the Minister of Resources and Development, that there was direction in the case of the members of the committee? What possible doubt is there about the direction of the other members who have come in and said what was going to be done? What doubt is there about the direction there was in regard to Haldimand?

May I refer to Haldimand particularly. At the time this subject was first raised the Prime Minister expressed the hope that in dealing with this we would avoid political controversy, and that if there was any complaint the views would be expressed to him so that if possible steps might be taken to meet those objections. Following that request and following subsequent discussion of this subject, which was in no way confidential but related to the business of this house, I placed before the Prime Minister the views in regard to Haldimand which I hoped would receive some consideration. Nevertheless the course originally intended has been followed in regard to Haldimand, and there is gerrymandering of the very kind that was criticized so vigorously by the late Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King in this house and outside the house, and by other Liberal members in this house.

There was a case where Haldimand, which could easily have been combined with other areas to retain its identity, an old historic riding, was merged in a way that has the effect of eliminating one of two Conservative members in this house, one a member who represented the riding before. Can there be any doubt about the direction that took place in regard to the merging of Souris and Brandon? Significantly enough they are two Conservative ridings in a province which has three Conservatives, having had only one a little over a year ago. There again, nevertheless, the riding of Souris, represented for many years by a member who has given distinguished, loyal and effective service in this house to his own province of Manitoba, as well as to the constituency he serves and to the people of Canada, has been merged. After all these years of service the hon. member now finds himself confronted with the