

Electoral Boundaries

representatives. I believe in a strong federal state. Unless we make parliament a truly federal parliament and reform the Senate it is increasingly likely that Canada will be balkanized and become a country composed of semi-independent states. I do not look forward to that condition but I should be irresponsible in not considering that possibility, especially as we are considering redistribution.

Third, I shall vote against this bill because I contend its provisions amount to gerrymandering. Under the amalgam method proposed to the committee by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp), the average number of voters in constituencies in provinces whose population is under 1,500,000 is to be smaller than the average number in the constituencies of the other provinces of Canada. I do not disagree with that concept. The President of the Privy Council also suggested that the average size of constituency populations in Ontario and Quebec is to be greater than the average size of constituency populations in the rest of Canada. I think that is a reasonable philosophy. He said also that there is to be a third category of province which will include Alberta and British Columbia initially, and later Alberta, and the constituency populations in those provinces are to be of an intermediate size. What he suggested sounded good; it sounded like a suggestion which we could buy.

Then he produced his formula, or the arithmetic behind his philosophy. By coincidence, I am sure, Alberta and British Columbia, the two intermediate provinces, ended up with having the largest average constituency populations in the country. I am sure this happened by coincidence when one remembers that these two provinces in the period 1972-74 had only four Liberal members representing them in this House. When one considers the much greater number of Progressive Conservative and NDP members those provinces sent to Ottawa, it becomes most difficult, even for the most generous-minded, to escape the conclusion that the minister's proposal involves gerrymandering.

In the next following election, British Columbia returned more Liberals to Ottawa. Those members examined this redistribution proposal and said things in the province had changed. The government said, "We will need to take that into consideration." It then considered the formula under which British Columbia was to be an intermediate province, and it said to the members from British Columbia, "You may now have the privilege of representing what we consider a large province." Incredibly—and this was only possible because the Liberal members from British Columbia had been newly elected—those members accepted the government's proposal. They are getting hosed, but they accept what the government is doing.

If the government is insisting, as it says it is, on approaching this question in a non-partisan way and saying that the smaller provinces shall have smaller than average sized constituencies and the larger provinces larger than average sized constituencies, and that certain provinces shall be considered as intermediate sized provinces, then, for goodness sake, why did it not bring forward a proposal which will do just that, instead of trying to "con" us into accepting a proposal which is nothing short of gerrymandering?

[Mr. Andre.]

Mr. Woolliams: And political manoeuvring.

Mr. Andre: For example, Alberta has 20 per cent of the population of Ontario and British Columbia has, perhaps, 25 per cent. If the government had said that constituency sizes in the intermediate provinces shall be as large as the average size of constituencies in both, large and small provinces taken together, the result would be this. Alberta would be represented by 22 seats, and British Columbia by 29. So even while claiming to be non-partisan, even while saying it will take into account regional interests in Canada, the government cannot resist putting the boots to Alberta and British Columbia. I do not think that the President of the Privy Council can ask this House to approve that kind of proposal. Certainly for those reasons I cannot vote for this bill.

Mr. Benjamin: What is your reason, then?

Mr. Andre: I could explain it to the hon. member in one syllable words three times, and he still would not understand.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member permit a question. Did I understand him to say that his calculation results in Alberta's having a constituency population larger than that of Quebec and Ontario?

Mr. Andre: That is right.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Is the hon. member not aware that the bill specifically says that this shall not happen, and that the calculations work out to about 80,000 per constituency for Alberta and 83,000 for Quebec?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I will not argue procedure with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), or theology, but I will argue points of arithmetic. On the basis of the redistribution method that was proposed to the committee, I indicated—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: Just a moment—

An hon. Member: Stick to the facts. You are suggesting something new.

Mr. Andre: No, Mr. Speaker. The amendment I am speaking about says this: If an intermediate province is hosed, it is given the privilege of being considered as a large province. That is what the minister's suggestion entails. On that basis the average constituency population in Alberta is to be 81,400; in Ontario it is to be 81,000 and in Quebec 80,400. So Alberta constituencies are to be larger than those in Quebec.

● (2100)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, looking at the table and looking at the bill, it states that no province, not one of the other nine, shall have a constituency average greater than that of Quebec. In making any calculation you have to take that into account. Looking at the table given today by the government House leader, I