

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE

LENGTHY DEBATE ON REDISTRIBUTION BILL.

The Measure Occupied Attention of the House for Several Hours Yesterday Afternoon.

Press Gallery, March 24th.

The members could talk nothing but redistribution this afternoon. Every other item of business was hurried out of the way with scant examination to prepare for the second reading of the long-desired measure. The speech of the Attorney-General was in general defence of the bill, which he described as the fairest measure of the kind which could be brought in British Columbia. There was an abundance of applause when he stated that on second thought he considered it advisable to strike out old lists and have new lists prepared, while there was a smile of incredulity when the Attorney-General intimated that there was no intention of bringing on a general election, but that the government would continue to do business until the conclusion of their natural term of office.

Mr. Smith drew the attention of the Minister of Mines to the fact that the local press of Kootenay reported that all was being done for the C. P. R. on the lands which he and his colleagues had been working on for some time. The minister promised to look into the matter.

Mr. McBride inquired for the North Victoria writ, with the usual result. He observed, amid laughter, that he supposed the government would have a contract with Marconi to erect a station on Salt Spring Island about the time of the election.

He also asked for better quarters for the opposition, the caucus room having been appropriated by the senior member for Vancouver. The President Secretary promised to look into the matter.

Lead Remedies.

On the adjourn debate on the following resolution: "That in view of the present depressed condition of the lead market, and the disability under which the producers of lead and silver within the province are laboring, it is the duty of the government to take such steps as may be necessary to protect the producer of their mines economically smelted and refined."

"Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the public interest requires on the part of the government the serious consideration of the establishment and operation by them of lead smelting and refining works within the province."

Some measure of relief was wished to be considered of the establishment and operation by them of lead smelting and refining works within the province."

The production of the silver-lead mines of British Columbia for four years past was as follows:

Year	Lead, lbs.	Silver, ozs.
1898	1,316,777	4,292,401
1899	2,182,430	2,667,414
1900	2,325,321	2,568,172
1901, estimated	5,029,230	2,024,079

The average price in New York was in 1900: Lead per 100 lbs., \$4.37; silver, per oz., \$1.33; in 1901, lead, \$4.33; silver, per oz., \$1.35. In December, 1901, lead was only \$4.15, and dropped to \$4 in January, 1902. Silver was \$1.15 in December last, and had remained stationary since.

If a government refinery was established, the product could be held and the producer helped to find a market. The Orient was the most promising field for British Columbia lead, but it was sold there through English intermediaries at about \$12.50 freight, no hauling to and from the smelter, about \$10 of which might be saved with a government refinery. He felt sure that it would be established as a business proposition for the government to engage in this trade and to market our ores in the Orient.

It was estimated that in 1901, 50,529,000 pounds of lead was raised in British Columbia; much of this might be used at home, as Canada imported \$580,010 worth last year.

The cost of establishing a refinery would probably be \$250,000, and the cost of treatment about \$12 a ton, with \$1 a ton profit. This would be a net profit for the province, while the producer would be protected and encouraged.

He thought it was the duty of the Dominion government to take this matter up, but they showed no disposition to do so. Mining was the paramount industry in British Columbia, and it was the duty of the government to foster this matter as far as possible. (Applause.)

Mr. Martin adjourned the debate. He was seeking correspondence.

Capt. Tallow moved that an order of the House be granted for a return of all correspondence, reports and other documents in the possession of the government that has taken place or been made during the last nine years, in any way relating to the Squamish-Pemberton Meadows road or trail.

He said that for years past petitions had been carried to Vancouver for the advisability of opening up the Squamish-Pemberton meadows. This valley, two miles wide by 40 miles long, contained about 40,000 acres of the finest alluvial

lands. A few settlers had taken up holdings, but they were shut off from markets.

He had heard that the government was giving tracts of lands in Bulkley valley to settlers on very favorable terms. He found no fault with the government policy thereon. But if these advantages were to be given to settlers in a remote part of the province, surely they would pay some attention to the wants and sufferings of these settlers.

The settlers there also wished to be included in the New Westminster district in redistribution.

The Chief Commissioner moved the adjournment of the debate.

Vancouver and New Westminster Railway.

Mr. Gardin introduced a bill to amend the Vancouver & Westminster Railway Act, 1901. It was referred to the railway committee.

Fraser Bridge.

Mr. Clifford moved, amid applause, this being his first parliamentary effort, that an order of the House be granted for a return of correspondence.

1. What tenders have been received by the government for the construction of the substructure of the Fraser river bridge, with particulars of sum tendered, of person or persons, company or companies, tendering, and of the security or securities deposited by the different tenderers.

2. What tenders have been received by the government for the construction of the superstructure of the Fraser river bridge, with particulars of sum tendered, of person or persons tendering, and of the security or securities deposited by the different tenderers.

3. What tenders have been received for the construction of both substructure and superstructure of the Fraser river bridge, with full particulars asked in 1 and 2.

He considered, he said, the building of the bridge to be one of vital importance to Westminster. That city had suffered very severely owing to the great fire and was having an up hill fight, and it was the bounden duty of the government to assist them. The sum of \$500,000 had been appropriated, but he understood this was insufficient.

What he wanted the government to do was to let the contract for the substructure at once, and before the other amount was required he was sure the Dominion government would come to his assistance. (Loud applause.)

Mr. McBride complimented Mr. Clifford on his maiden effort. The building of that bridge was in line with the government's policy, and was a great benefit to the lower Mainland. He commended the government for their assistance. As years ago the Chief Commissioner had given the people of New Westminster the right to have the work would be proceeded with at once as soon as Mr. Brown was elected. He (the Chief Commissioner) had read telegrams during the campaign which were intended to convince the people of New Westminster of that. The high water would soon come and the work be put back seven or eight months. If the opposition were on the treasury benches they would close the contract at once.

The Chief Commissioner appreciated the concern of the lower Mainland members. The bridge would be of international importance to the opposition were it lower he had no doubt the contract would be let lastly, and the difficulties he foresaw would follow. Mr. Waddell was new on his way to Victoria, and when he arrived no time would be lost. It was necessary to ascertain the financial ability of contractors, else it was useless making a contract.

Mr. McBride recalled the singular fact that ten days since the Chief Commissioner had reported Mr. Waddell as en route here. He was surely making a long trip.

Mr. Oliver said the bridge was of great importance to the lower Fraser valley, Westminster, to Vancouver and to the whole Coast. It would let another railway way into Vancouver and give them the right to the valley. The people of his district were convinced there was unnecessary delay in proceeding with this work. The people wanted the contract let at once. If the government was in a hurry to let the contract, he would let it at once. He would let it at once. He would let it at once.

Mr. Gilmour moved the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. Ellison introduced an act amending the act relating to the Yukon Railway Act, 1900. It was read a first time and referred to the railway committee.

Questions.

Mr. Houston asked the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works the following questions:

1. Is the West Kootenay Power & Light company in arrears for fees under the provisions of the "Water Classes Consolidation Act, 1897?"

2. If so, for what amount?

Mr. Wells replied as follows:

1. Yes.

2. The amount to be paid by the company is a matter which is now under consideration.

Mr. Fulton asked the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works the following questions:

1. Have any instructions been given by the Hon. Chief Commissioner during the last four months relative to the appointment of a road foreman at Salmon Lake?

2. If so, what were such instructions?

Mr. Wells replied as follows:

1. Yes.

2. That when such appointment is required to be made, the road superintendent is to communicate with the Chief Commissioner, who will give instructions as to whom the road superintendent is to appoint.

Mr. Kirk asked the Minister of Agriculture the following questions:

1. What is the amount of claims still unpaid for cattle killed on account of tuberculosis?

2. Is it the intention of the government to ask for a sum to be voted during the present session for the payment of such claims?

F. Adams for North Arm, Fraser river bridge, at Eburne not in order.

Hon. Mr. Wells replied as follows:

No security—cheque accompanied tender.

The bill amending the "Children's Protection Act of British Columbia" was read a third time and finally passed.

Redistribution Bill.

All the other bills were passed in succession until the Redistribution bill was reached, when the Attorney-General, arising to move the second reading, was greeted with applause.

The Attorney-General reviewed the nature of previous redistribution measures, and of how the number of members had been increased from 27 to 33, and a year or two up to 38, by granting five more seats—one to Vancouver city, one to Cassiar and three to Kootenay.

The present bill increased the representation to 42. He believed he could convince the whole House that it was as fair as any that could be drawn. It was not a simple matter. When the paucity of population, diversified interests and the topographical features of British Columbia were taken into consideration, it was not an easy matter to draft a bill agreeable to all classes.

In 1898 Victoria had four members, which she still retained. The government thought, taking population into consideration, that the population could be divided rapidly to other districts, they would deprive Esquimalt of one member. It had been a prominent district in politics when many other districts were unpopulated. While it and its big population in regard to the voters' lists for nine months, the fleet was there, and hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent there. From the fact that it was the station of the increasing fleet and garrison, and that it would probably have many fishing stations, it would likely increase very much in population. It was an important place and practically the centre of British Columbia. The government regretfully withdrew a member, leaving the boundaries the same.

North Victoria became the Islands. Gabriola had been taken into the riding from South Nanaimo. The population of that district amounted to 1,200 souls.

South Nanaimo had lost Lasqueti, Gabriola, Texada and Cedar, because they had grown up at Esquimalt, and Alexandra, with Ladysmith as a chief town, this increasing the population.

North Nanaimo had been wiped out, and included in Alberni district. It was largely agricultural, and in immediate connection with Alberni. No village had been practically depopulated. The population in Texada, 300, was included in Alberni and Lasqueti, 300, had been included in Alberni. Possibly this would not meet with general approval. (Hear, hear.) But where, he asked, could Texada and Lasqueti be put? It would help out the population of Alberni, which had the greatest number of any constituency in British Columbia.

That reduced Vancouver Island members to 12. The population of the Island was 52,226, out of 177,000 of a population, while cutting out Indians, the figures were 45,517 to 104,108, in favor of the Mainland.

A Voice—How about Orientals?

Hon. Mr. Eberts—I think there are about the same number on each side. He acknowledged the cordial co-operation of Census Commissioner Blue, who had sent a type-written statement of the census, not waiting for its being printed, to assist the British Columbia government.

On the Mainland the population of Kootenay and Vancouver had increased wonderfully. Vancouver city, with a population of 20,000, received another member, giving it five representatives. The general bias had been in regard to cities a member for 5,000 people.

Representation by population was all right, for instance in Ontario, but it could not be made a hard and fast rule in British Columbia. It was fairer to apply it to cities than to country country. Victoria's population was 20,000, and Vancouver 23,881, including Indians. On the basis of one member for each 5,000, Vancouver was entitled to five members.

Chilliwack with 3,680 and Delta with 5,794, each retained a member.

The object of retaining the districts was to keep the old British Columbia names. West Yale had been slightly changed. The southern portion about Granite Creek had been put in Similkameen and Savona had been put in Kamloops, but in turn part of North Yale had gone to Nicola.

Further up the Fraser a member had been taken from the Chilkoote. Old Chilkoote remained with two. At one time it had three members.

Kamloops had been changed, Savona had been included in it and Nicola lake taken from it.

Revelstoke had lost territory, but the population was in keeping with the basis started with. Trout lake mining division had been taken away and joined with Kaslo. This was wise, because a railway was being built from Trout lake to Kaslo, and commerce would go that way. To give population to Kaslo division Trout lake was given to it.

Northeast Kootenay became Columbia. Southeast Kootenay was divided into two by the Kootenay river, called Penticton and Cranbrook.

Nelson City got a member. Yale, Warden, Trail City, West Robson and other points had been constituted into Ymir.

Geographically the Ymir division might seem peculiar, but the northern prolongation was commercially joined with Nelson and Rossland, and was shut off from Sloon by a range of mountains.

Rossland city got a member by itself, having a population of 6,133.

The Rossland division had been cut out, part going to Ymir; a member for Trail, one for Grand Forks and vicinity, one for Greenwood and vicinity and one for Similkameen. Population had gone there so rapidly that it was thought better to increase the representation to that extent.

The House had been increased by four, the Mainland getting six. Cassiar had been divided into Atlin and Skeena. One member lived at Atlin and one at Skeena. Part of Cariboo had been put into Skeena, namely Skeena, which was not so easily reached from Cariboo.

Taking the census, the voting strength and the influx of population into certain portions of the bill, he thought, was a fair one, although doubtless with defects. They had brought down what they regarded as a very fair and equitable measure.

Mr. McBride—Will you help us to improve on it in committee?

The Attorney-General—Certainly. There had been some discussion on the voters' lists, and the bill did not provide for their cancellation, but on second consideration he thought it advisable to do so. (Applause.) They were innumerable. It was thought best to wipe them out. It would not involve a great deal of expense.

Mr. Helmcken reminded the government that the lists in Victoria had been cancelled a year or two ago and only six weeks allowed on which to get the rolls in order.

Hon. Mr. Eberts said the government of the day did give a short time, but a repetition of the bill, he wished he could say unreservedly that he believed the government had been guilty in this respect. So far as the opposition was concerned, nothing would be left undone to place a bill on the statutes which was fair and above criticism.

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Capt. Tallow said: "Mr. Speaker, I cannot help admitting a feeling of disappointment in regarding this act after reading the repeated assurance of the Hon. Attorney-General that the bill when brought down 'will be satisfactory to everybody.'"

"To commence with, I find the House has increased from 38 to 42 members. I do not see how this can be justified, as our House to-day is, if anything, too large in proportion to our population and resources and there is no reason to add that increase of over nine per cent. a year to the cost of legislation."

"Looking over the past ten years we find that the cost of legislation has been steadily increasing, as follows: 1892, \$20,540; 1893, \$30,075; 1894, \$48,010; 1895, \$39,410; 1896, \$30,884; 1897, \$31,504; 1898, \$39,132; 1899, \$43,003; 1900, \$47,933."

"But, as I say it shows a steady increase in the cost of legislation which is to-day proportionately too high for our population and revenue and yet it is proposed to increase the same by over ten per cent. It simply appears to be a loophole for a temporary escape from facing this question on a broad and fair basis, as must be done sooner or later."

"According to the latest returns there are some 44,000 registered voters in the province. This proposed bill increases the House to about one member for each 1,100 voters—the cost of legislation will be increased so that each of the 44,000 voters will pay one dollar and one-half to the costs of legislation, or if we take the return of votes cast in the last general election we find the bill will give one member for every 647 of such voters at a cost of over two dollars per head of the population."

"I have seen the House reduced to say 35 than increased as proposed."

"In such a measure as this the government had an opportunity of once for all obliterating the unpopularity of the bill, which for it time revealed."

"The country could, for purposes of redistribution, have been divided into its three natural geographical divisions:

1. The country to the east of the Cascade mountains, contained in the Federal constituencies of Yale and Cariboo.

2. The country to the west of the Cascades, comprising the Burrard and New Westminster constituencies.

3. The Island of Vancouver, which was 177,272, which is on my basis divided as follows: East of Cascades, 61,880; West of Cascades, 65,209; Vancouver Island, 50,184."

"This bill proposes to give Vancouver Island 12 members, West of the Cascades (Vancouver, New Westminster city and district and Cassiar) 12 members, and the Island of Vancouver 18 members."

"A House of 36 members would give one member to every 5,000 of population."

"Considering the immense area of the Interior it might be wise to increase representation to 14 and by taking a member from Lillooet, as proposed in this bill. We would thus be able to give three additional representatives to the country south of the C. P. R."

"I think the Burrard and New Westminster districts would for the present be content with their present number of representatives, especially as the decrease in the size of the House would proportionately increase their voting power."

"This I think would be a fair and just proposition, and as I wish I ask for your consideration of this government and the House."

"Now I will ask you to look into a few of the incongruities of this proposed measure, which I claim is an unjust and unfair bill in many respects, and which I can only support in the hope that it will undergo great changes in committee."

"On two occasions in this House—in 1900 and in 1901—a resolution was brought in asking for a Redistribution Bill; this resolution was in each case defeated by the government on the ground that it was not expedient to frame such a measure until the census returns were at hand. We now have these returns; but is this bill in any way framed on them? Whatever may be the basis of the bill, it is certainly not on the census."

"I find that some thirty constituencies are represented by one member each, with very disproportionate populations; for instance, the 'Islands' with a population of 1,359 in both of which are included Indians have the same representation as Nanaimo and Rossland, cities of over 6,000, or Richmond and Delta with over 5,000 each, to say nothing of their agricultural, fishing and other industries in which large capital is invested."

"I find there are: Three constituencies with a population of between 1,000 and 2,000 each represented by one member; 7 constituencies, between 2,000 and 3,000 population, each having one member; 9 constituencies, between 3,000 and 4,000 population, each one member; 5 constituencies, between 4,000 and 5,000 population, each one member; 4 constituencies, between 5,000 and 6,000 population, each one member; 3 constituencies, between 6,000 and 7,000 population, each one member; 2 constituencies, between 7,000 and 8,000 population, each one member; 1 constituency, between 8,000 and 9,000 population, each one member."

"Is there any fairness in this? And the representation of the district with a population of 18,851, with its wealth of lumber, fish and agriculture, has four members, while the Islands, Columbia and Similkameen, with 4,557 people, have only one member each."

"The giving of five seats to Vancouver as a departure from the rule in other provinces. In Toronto with 300,000 people there were only four members. The government of that city, yet they were careful not to establish a precedent which would be the harbinger of the legislature in future. While it was laudable to give Vancouver proportionate representation it must be remembered that it was easier to increase than to decrease, and it was almost impossible to take away a member from a city once it was granted."

He thought British Columbia had not a population which justified an increase of membership. He wanted to see the bill as stable as possible. He would not coming himself to the advisability of increasing membership, though perhaps the exceptional circumstances in British Columbia justified such a rule.

Neither did they want to see any geographical assurance of the bill. He wished he could say unreservedly that he believed the government had been guilty in this respect. So far as the opposition was concerned, nothing would be left undone to place a bill on the statutes which was fair and above criticism.

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