

It is difficult to question the principle of representation by population, yet rep. by pop. fails to support another cornerstone of confederation—the protection of regional interests and the allocation of resources to provinces. Certainly the cause of confederation is not served by a federal government which, under the guise of national interest, rides roughshod over the rights of provinces. This serves to foster the development of dual loyalties, and in some cases, sells the cause of the separatists.

The editorial continues in that tone, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to read it all but the penultimate paragraph is worth noting. It reads:

Canada has gone through great turmoil in recent years debating the concept of making confederation flexible enough to accommodate two nations. With this issue, still unresolved to anybody's satisfaction, Canada is moving rapidly to the day when the federal system may have to become flexible enough to accommodate ten "nations".

Someone in the New Democratic Party made a remark about the newspaper being the dinosaur, or something along those lines. To indicate that this feeling is shared by other Westerners and is a non-partisan issue, I should like to quote from a publication issued by the Edmonton *Journal* entitled "What Does the West Want?" which contains an article by Izzy Asper, the former Liberal leader in Manitoba. He begins by saying:

Manitoba and the other western provinces have lived under a system of economic colonialism to eastern Canada for over 100 years and this cannot be allowed to continue.

Mr. Asper goes on to describe some of the economic disparities and then continues:

While the reorientation of federal policies is much needed in the shorter run, the complete renegotiation of confederation is the ultimate long term solution to the problem of the economic costs that the present federal system imposes on western Canadians.

Western Canadians want a truly federal union where regions are properly identified and guaranteed a certain basic sovereignty and political and economic equality, both in relation to each other and in their representations within the central government, and where distinct cultures are treated with the dignity and given the equality and rights which they deserve.

A truly federal parliament must have a radically reformed Senate—a Senate assigned significant areas of responsibility. It should have authority over matters of national importance and should provide a just and democratic representation for the underpopulated regions of Canada. Thus, a reformed elected Senate must give each province the same number of seats. This is the only method to alleviate the problems of regional disparity that currently exist.

Later in the same article Mr. Asper writes:

Western Canada's weakness within the country results directly from the fact that Canada's parliamentary system is not truly a federal institution. Reform of the parliamentary structure designed to provide less populated areas with just representation in a reformed confederation must be considered as a major priority for all western provinces wishing to become partners within a strong federal union.

That is the view of the Liberal who is more than a casual observer; in fact, he is leader of a provincial party. I think his advice makes good sense.

Not only does the amalgam method of redistribution presented in this bill not address itself to that problem, but the committee of the House of Commons which was supposed to discuss this issue did not have an opportunity to raise points like this. It is improper to ask this House to approve in principle a method which essentially has not been discussed by a committee of the House, has not been publicly debated, has not been thoroughly analysed, and which does not address itself to any of the fundamental problems.

#### *Electoral Boundaries*

The first thing wrong with the amalgam method is that it calls for an unlimited increase in the number of members in the House of Commons. This is folly, to say the least. It will cost the Canadian public a lot more money to maintain this institution and, more important, will reduce the effectiveness of members of parliament. An individual member of parliament would have less influence in a 300 member House or a 350 or 400 member House than in a 264 member House or even a 200 member House. If we are going to change the size of the membership of the House, we should probably decrease it.

On several occasions the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) has indicated a desire to examine methods of making the House more efficient and we agree that we must find better ways to handle the country's business. We feel it equally, if not more, important, however, to find ways of making the House more effective. This redistribution method is not going to achieve either of these objectives; what it will do is increase the authority of the executive branch of government.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Andre:** What it will do is increase the authority of the already overgrown Prime Minister's office and the already overgrown Privy Council office.

In his remarks the President of the Privy Council indicated that the government wanted to increase the number of members so that each member would have fewer constituents, making for easier communication. I think the duties of a member of parliament fall into two classes, Mr. Speaker; he is a legislator performing his duties in the House of Commons, and he is an ombudsman or, as one of my colleagues said, a second rate social worker. A member's responsibility toward his constituents is very important, but rather than increase the number of members it would be better to improve the staff and facilities available to present members. It is inconsistent with our responsibility as legislators to suggest that we would be better if there were more of us. In fact, we would be less effective. The constituency office system introduced last year was a step in the right direction, and as populations grow we should expand that type of service.

There is another problem with this amalgam method which was referred to in the article by Izzy Asper from which I quoted.

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The bill does not address itself to preserving the federal system of government in Canada. Recently newspaper articles and television and radio programs have all made clear that, increasingly, the federal-provincial conference has become the forum in which we want to discuss important national problems. We do not discuss them so much in the House of Commons, partly because of the diminished authority of the various regions of Canada. It has become increasingly clear to the people of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and other provinces that it is better to let provincial representatives deal with their problems than refer them to members of parliament.

I do not think that it is desirable to foster the idea in Canada that people in regions remote from the capital may obtain redress of grievance only through their provincial