

Redistribution

it met with approval, because the very member who has now made that statement applauded with great satisfaction when the minister gave a quotation which he had thought was a demonstration that there was no satisfaction with the commission system in Britain.

Mr. McIlraith: He was not here when the statement was made this morning.

Mr. Drew: I am reading from the very speech to which the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has referred. I quote from column 3045 of the same *British Hansard* record for March 24, 1948:

Anyone can see from what has already happened the spirit in which this process will be conducted and the object at which it aims. It is one which we are familiar with on the continent of Europe, in countries where the communists have established their totalitarian rule, where the Minister of the Interior shapes the constituencies in accordance with his own party interests, after taking such advice as he thinks fit.

If ever there was a time to avoid the adoption of such continental methods over here, it is surely now, when the arbitrary regulation of voting and the shaping of constituencies, in order to secure the permanent domination of the party in power, is one of the principal objections we are raising to the totalitarian system in all its forms.

Now I have placed these quotations on record, first of all to remove any suggestion that the statement that Mr. Churchill made was a statement intended to condemn the commission system. It was a statement intended to condemn the very kind of thing that is being done right now. And when he uses the terms that he has used, and describes methods of that kind as a dirty racket, I am quite prepared to accept this speech of Mr. Churchill, which has been introduced here by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It seems to me that the words he has employed appropriately describe conduct of this kind as that of gerrymandering constituencies for political advantage.

We have read *Hansard* and we have considered this. And may I say that as recently as only a few days ago the Prime Minister of Australia, as I think hon. members opposite know, indicated his satisfaction with the way this system worked over there. And there is plenty of evidence that a system of that kind does work.

I would remind the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration again, in regard to that reference to the commission, that Mr. Churchill said the commission had given their verdict fairly and impartially upon the basis prescribed by the government. After all, the government and the house must be responsible for the basis upon which any independent commission will carry out its duties. His words are clear that in his opinion it had

[Mr. Drew.]

carried out those duties fairly and impartially, and we have simply made this suggestion, and based our suggestion upon the experience in Great Britain, Australia and elsewhere, where they have been able to carry out their duties fairly and impartially, as Mr. Churchill said. That was all we have ever contended, and we contend it with even more vigour now, in view of the reference made by the minister.

Mr. Harris (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Chairman, I am not particularly flattered by what the hon. member has said, because it is an indication that he did not pay too much attention to what I said this morning. I shall read what I said this morning, so that there can be no doubt as to what was said at that time.

Having indicated that for two days hon. members opposite had been debating a question that had been settled last Saturday, without any protest from this side, in the hope that we might as a consequence get on with the debate, I proceeded to answer what had been asked of me by the hon. member for Peel, and said that I would break the rules only to that extent. I spoke in these words:

It is not entirely an open and shut question, one which can be decided overnight—

I was referring to the question of a redistribution commission.

—merely by the assertion by hon. members opposite that another system would be better than the one we now have.

I was referring to the system; I was not referring to a commission as such. I was referring to the system of redistribution by an independent commission. I went on to say then what had been said in the United Kingdom with respect to the operation of the system, that system being the introduction of a bill in the House of Commons, after a report. And I quoted Mr. Churchill on that point, saying that he disapproved of the government of the day, as he said, introducing political advantage by changing the representation by the report and by presenting it to parliament.

Now, there was no suggestion whatever that Mr. Churchill was speaking of the operation of the commission itself. The suggestion was that he was referring to the system of an independent commission subordinate to parliament—and that is what my hon. friends opposite have been debating. It is not to be taken as an argument from me that such a system is wrong, and that the commission should be rejected. I am not saying that. I am merely pointing out that every hon. member opposite who has spoken on this subject has ended up with the statement that