

Redistribution

decision to proceed in any event with the pattern that has been adopted for redistribution of the representation of the people of Canada, then this represents the last stage in a gerrymandering procedure which has become a subject of criticism over many years. I need not enlarge upon the statements that have been made by myself and by other members of the opposition that no one party can be charged alone with the responsibility for following a course in regard to redistribution in past years which has done a great deal to bring this method into contempt. Nevertheless, there does come some time when it is desirable that we recognize the change of events and that we do progress with the experience of other jurisdictions before us to improve the methods by which our own democratic processes will work out to the best advantage of our people and in a manner that will give them the highest possible measure of confidence in the system which is intended to serve their best interests.

We have made proposals in regard to another method and I submit, Mr. Speaker, that it is appropriate for me to refer briefly to this again because I intend to introduce a motion which would have the effect of delaying the coming into force of this act for a period of six months. If that motion were accepted, instead of this being merely regarded as a device to dispose of the measure itself, it could become the procedure by which the other course still could be adopted and public confidence established in our system of representation of the people in the House of Commons.

Already, Mr. Speaker, there have been comments in the press right across Canada which indicate, in spite of what was said by the Minister of Finance yesterday, that people are not uninterested in this subject. When the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) said that people are not interested in it he was reflecting a course which has been quite apparent, particularly on the part of the Minister of Finance. That of course has applied to other subjects as well. People are interested in it. I think it can be said that editorial comment generally reflects the degree of interest that there is in a subject, although we rarely have a uniform pattern of comment in the editorials of the newspapers of this country. That is the very natural expression of freedom of opinion and freedom of speech that we wish to preserve. But there has been considerable comment on this subject.

I should like to refer to an editorial which appeared yesterday in the *Montreal Star*. I refer to that editorial because that highly respected publication is not ordinarily regarded as being unduly critical of the

present government, although it does show a commendable impartiality in its approach to public questions. In yesterday's edition of the *Montreal Star* there is an editorial which I quote for the reason that it supports the contention that I intend to place before the house this morning. The heading on the editorial is, "There is still time to redistribute fairly." I have no intention of reading the whole editorial, but I should like to read the beginning of it.

Conservatives at Ottawa are staging a minor filibuster over the government's redistribution bill. Mr. Drew has asked again for the appointment of an independent commission to redraw constituency boundaries. From the government side comes no sign of agreement. Instead there is an evident determination to push through a bill already suspect.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I have ruled on previous occasions that it is not in order to read editorials in this house which reflect upon the proceedings of the house at the present time. Beauchesne's third edition, paragraph 266, reads:

The rule is quite clear, that the quoting of a newspaper, an author or a book which reflects upon debate before the house, either directly or indirectly, is entirely out of order, because members are here to give their own opinion and not to quote the opinion of others . . .

Members may quote an article or a book stating facts, but a commentary on any proceeding or any discussion in the house, with the object of swinging an opinion to one side or the other, is out of order.

I made the same ruling last year, and I think I should ask members of the house to observe it.

Mr. Drew: I recognize that there is a borderline in regard to quotations from the press in cases of this kind, and I do not intend to delay the discussion by entering into an argument on that point. I say that there is a borderline because the difference between press comment or an editorial or a report that states what may be regarded as facts, and one which may be regarded as reflecting, to use the word in the rule, on the proceedings of the house is sometimes a vague and uncertain area. I recognize that it may be difficult to determine that area. I do not want to delay the discussion of this subject by entering into an argument on this particular point today, because perhaps having indicated that there are editorial comments I could paraphrase the general effect of them without quoting anyone else's opinion for the purpose of supporting the arguments we have put forward.

It is sufficient to say that there has been a substantial expression of opinion outside of this house as well as in the house, and in conversation in the corridors, shall we say, that it would be desirable to get away from a method that has been subject to criticism by members on both sides of the house.