

*Redistribution Commission*

My own experience in dealing with the matter at that time was of course restricted to the problems of Manitoba. The problem there, as has been the case in the redistribution previous to 1951, was made more difficult by the fact that it was necessary for the province of Manitoba, along with the province of Saskatchewan, to lose some of its seats in the House of Commons. Hon. members who have reviewed the history of former redistributions will have discovered that Saskatchewan lost several seats at that time; but in order to save the situation an artificial floor was put into operation in that particular instance. Manitoba had no artificial floor placed under its representation following 1951, with the result that we dropped two more seats in the House of Commons. This has meant that our representation since 1941 dropped from 17 to 14 seats. That, for a province such as Manitoba, was a very serious loss indeed, particularly when we take into consideration the fact that Manitoba is dominated by Winnipeg, an urban area which at the present time contains almost half the population of that province.

In 1951 the decision was made to amalgamate the constituency I represented at that time, the old Brandon constituency, with the former constituency of Souris. This meant that the whole southwestern corner of the province of Manitoba would be represented by one member of parliament, and the population of the new constituency rose to something like 70,000, which was about the average for a typical urban riding. It meant that the member for Brandon-Souris, which happened to be myself, would be representing an area much larger than most urban ridings, but having at the same time a population that was comparable to the more closely integrated and more easily serviced typical urban constituencies.

There was an even deeper implication. It so happened that the only two rural Conservative members at that time were from the southwest corner of the province of Manitoba. The late Arthur Ross had sat in this house from the year 1940 as the sole Conservative representative from Manitoba until I and the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre joined him in 1951. It might have been merely a coincidence that the decision was made to amalgamate those two constituencies. There could have been an operation conducted on other parts of the Manitoba political anatomy, but it was not without some significance that the decision was made to combine the old Souris and Brandon ridings into the new riding of Brandon-Souris. In fact I would dare to suggest there might have

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

been some aspect of gerrymandering involved in the considerations.

Having come through that experience I think, Mr. Chairman, you will understand my present enthusiasm for the resolution that is before us and my desire to make a brief statement on it at this stage, particularly as my good friend the Secretary of State indicated he was still flexible in his thinking as to the specific proposals that would be in the bills when they are brought down. It is for that reason I am making my brief remarks at this time.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I wonder would the hon. gentleman permit me to say one word on that?

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Certainly.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I would like to indicate to the committee that not only am I paying careful attention to every suggestion being made at this stage, but when the bills have been given first reading it is also the view of the government that anything in those bills can be changed, and can be changed by a majority of the house, even if that majority does not necessarily include the majority of hon. members on this side, provided it does not touch one fundamental point which is that there must be an independent, impartial redistribution; and on this we are all agreed.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** I am pleased to have that interjection by the Secretary of State. I only wish that attitude of sweet reasonableness had prevailed back in 1951, because I think we might have been able to save the day for the old Souris riding if we had such a spirit of tolerance at that time.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Perhaps the hon. gentleman would never have been here then.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** That is a matter of interesting speculation, but as I recall it at that time it was hoped I would not be here representing the new constituency, because it was anticipated that the late Mr. Arthur Ross, who was several years my senior in the house, would receive the nomination and that the new member from Brandon, who had only been here for two years, would be sent out into the political wilderness.

As it happened, and as it always happens, there is poetic justice in all of these things. Colonel Ross stepped aside. He was a man of great courtesy and chivalry, and he went on to contest the provincial election and wrested a traditional seat from the provincial Liberal party. Indeed, looking back in terms of historic perspective, I might say that was the beginning of the ascendancy of the Conservative party in Manitoba. So you see, in all such things, as the poet Robbie Burns said, "The