

*British North America Act*

us, these circumstances only made the Prime Minister determined to seek and win another seat.

There are many other bad examples of gerrymandering, but I contend that the dangers of gerrymandering have been reduced to a point where they are not a serious issue, and I would say there are three main reasons which have brought this about. First, when there were small majorities, in the early days of this country, the changing of election boundaries even in a very limited degree could affect enough people to change the situation in a riding. Secondly, in the early days, we had static populations. This is no longer the case. Thirdly, the days of the die-hard party followers have been reduced or eliminated.

It might be interesting to go into the history of gerrymandering. The practice existed in Britain and in the United States for a good many years, but it fell to the lot of an American to give it a name and to carry it to its ultimate extreme. He was a gentleman by the name of Elbridge Gerry who was very prominent in the early years of the nineteenth century in the political circles of the United States. He was a member of congress, a governor of Massachusetts and, in 1812, Vice-President of the United States.

While governor of Massachusetts he became especially noted for his ingenuity in carving up ridings in the senatorial districts of his state in a very unusual manner. One such riding was carved up by taking a pocket here and leaving a pocket there in such a way that all his opponents votes were cast in one place. When the outlines of the riding thus created were placed on a map it looked like a salamander, and political opponents named the affair a "gerrymander" after Mr. Gerry. That is the reason for the word, and also the background against which the practice was carried on at that time.

I do feel that such gerrymandering as took place in 1812 would not be tolerated at the present time. When it was carried out, it was done to the discredit of those who were responsible. Furthermore, it is not always profitable, as those who carved up certain ridings prior to the general election of 1949 discovered to their sorrow. Aside from this, there are three practical reasons in support of this contention, as I have already mentioned.

The first is that majorities are increasing. In the early days of this country members were elected by a very small margin of votes. Let us consider my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I find that in the first election of 1872, the majority for the successful candidate was 121. In 1878, the majority

was 63, and in 1882 it was four. But since 1935 a very different picture has been presented. In that year, for instance, the majority was 2,265. In 1940 it was 1,691; in 1949 it was 1,820 and so forth down to 1957 when the majority was 3,853.

Only a few days ago the hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Mandziuk), when outlining the history of his riding, reminded us that at the first election there an equal number of votes was cast for each of the two candidates and as a result of some manoeuvring at that time both were elected. For the first ten elections, the majority to the successful candidate never amounted to more than 500 votes. However, in the eight elections since 1926 the majority has never been less than 1,000. In more recent times, the majorities have been even greater.

Related to this is the second matter I mentioned—static population. The population of Canada is no longer static. Population shifts are more frequent; travel is more extensive; immigration has changed the nature of many ridings, and a good many of our immigrants are now becoming entitled to vote. People move more rapidly from one area to another. In these circumstances the deliberate gerrymandering of seats might nowadays not even bring about the desired result by the time the next election rolled around.

The third matter I mentioned concerned the floating vote. We have noticed in recent times that people are beginning to vote as they see things rather than as their fathers saw them, and in recent elections we have observed that when there is a swing there is a massive swing in one direction or the other. To a large extent, therefore, a gerrymander which would gain a party a few votes would not necessarily be enough, unless it were terrific in scale, to ensure a riding for a particular candidate. Thus I say that the dangers of deliberately contrived gerrymandering are no longer a serious factor.

But even if this were not so, I should still be opposed to the bill for another reason. I am firmly of the opinion that we already have too many government commissions, crown companies and boards, directing the affairs of Canada, making decisions which should be made by parliament or the government, spending large sums of money and remaining responsible to no one for their decisions. They are independent, and the elected representatives of the people of Canada have no control over these commissions in any effective way. They have been established in very secure positions, and they have been removed from political interference.

To whom are these commissions responsible? The elected members of this house are