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By Alice Gibson

7643

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PREMIER BORDEN DISCUSES REPRESENTATION QUESTION

Continued from page 1

say that I do not think the case either for the Maritime Provinces generally or for Prince Edward Island in particular could have been put more thoroughly, more exhaustively, more eloquently or more cogently than it was by the Prime Minister of New Brunswick and the Prime Minister of Prince Edward Island. I think that everything was said that could be said on behalf of the Maritime Provinces generally,and on behalf of Prince Edward Island in respect to the special circumstances which were brought to the attention of the Government with regard to that province.

Let us for a moment give consider-

MARITIME PROVINCES

ation to the case of the Maritime provinces generally. Without going into the claim of these provinces exhaustively, I shall take the liberty of laying upon the table of the House, and, if the House will permit, having printed for the use of members, the memorandum placed before the Interprovincial Conference on behalf of the Maritime provinces generally and the memorandum placed before the same conference, and afterwards before the Government, on behalf of the province of Prince Edward Island; and in doing that, I shall relieve the House from listening to a fuller statement of the claims put forward. While the case on behalf of the Maritime provinces generally was put cogently, exhaustively and thoroughly, still one could not disguise from one's self the fact that in the first instance these provinces came into Confederation with a certain representation in this House, and it was the expectation of the Fathers of Confederation that they would gain and not lose. It is perfectly true that in the past twenty years their expectations have been disappointed in that regard, but it is also perfectly true that two of the fundamental considerations which had to be taken into account by those who made the compact upon which Confederation was based were the representation in Parliament and the distribution or division of legislative and executive powers as between the Dominion on the one hand and the provinces on the other; and, speaking for myself, I do not see how it would be possible for this Parliament to attempt any alteration in the representation of the provinces without the consent of the provinces themselves. It was in that connection that the question was taken up before the Interprovincial Conference held last autumn in the city of Ottawa, and the result of the proceedings of that conference amounted to this,that the conference declined to take any action on the subject, saying that the matter was one for the consideration of Parliment. It is absolutely, in one sense, for the consideration of this Parliament, although this Parliament has no power to amend the British North America Act. On the other hand, if I apprehend the situation correctly, so far as the four original provinces are concerned, it was to be also a question for these four original provinces to say whether or not any change could or should be made in the compact under which the first provinces entered into the Confederation. The province of Quebec having been fixed as the pivotal province for representation retains the exact number of sixty-five members in this House under all conditions. But as I have pointed out, it is possible for the relative representation of Quebec to be changed as it was changed in the early days of Confederation. It has also been changed in another sense and from another consideration through the admission of new provinces and increased membership in the House of Commons. Under these circumstances, as the provinces at the conference to which I have alluded had declined to take any action or pass any resolution on the subject—although I understand there were a good many expressions of sympathy—it did not seem to us to be our duty to come to this Parliament and propose any remedy for the unfortunate situation with which the Maritime provinces find themselves confronted. It might, however, be said, and I think with a good deal of truth, that in the Canadian Parliament the representatives of the Maritime provinces, like those of other provinces of Canada, do not act as a body for their provinces. To quote from a well-written editorial on this subject published in the Maritime provinces some ten years ago:

On almost every question they divide according to their attitude towards the government of the day. Perhaps it would be wiser to say that in their minds their view of what is best for the Dominion as a whole is paramount. Further than this the influence of a province in the great council of the Dominion does not depend nearly so much upon the number of representatives as in the ability, skill, experience, intellectual power and genius of the representatives. And it can fairly be said that in this respect the Maritime provinces have not been at all subordinate, no matter which party was in power.

Now, with regard to the case of the province of Prince Edward Island. It will be observed that the province of British Columbia had provision made, in the Order in Council which brought it into Confederation, that its representation then fixed should be increased under the provisions of the British North America Act. In the Order in Council passed nearly two years afterwards which brought the province of Prince Edward Island into Confederation the expression used was 'readjusted,' instead of the expression 'increased.' The case for Prince Edward Island is argued very cogently indeed upon the point that for many years it had refused to come into Confederation except upon a fixed representation which exceeded that to which it was entitled on the basis of population alone.

MEMBER FOR KING'S OBJECTS

It declined for many years to come into this confederation with only five members in the House of Commons, but eventually six were conceded to it, when it had a right to no more than five. It is argued that the construction of the Order in Council to which I have called attention was understood by those who carried on the negotiations on the part of Prince Edward Island, as meaning a readjustment by increase and not a readjustment that would decrease the numbers of representatives to which Prince Edward Island was intitled under the Order in Council in question. It is also urged on behalf of the province of Prince Edward Island that that province, not being one of the four provinces which created among themselves the original compact of Confederation, could not be dealt with in this regard by the Dominion as a whole, because the compact, in the case of Prince Edward Island was made not between that province and several others, but between this Dominion as a whole and the province of Prince Edward Island, then a sovereign province possessing plenary powers of self-government. It has been urged upon us with great vigour by the Premier of Prince Edward Island and by Mr. Stewart, a member of his Government, that steps be taken to fix a minimum representation for the province of Prince Edward Island of six, the number originally mentioned in the Confederation Act. It has been noted that in 1882 the Redistribution Bill did not diminish the representation of the province of Prince Edward Island, although, according to the census of 1881, Prince Edward Island was at that time entitled to no more than five members. At first I was very much impressed by this circumstance, but I observed that in a speech made by the hon. member for Kings, Prince Edward Island, in 1903, who argued strongly and forcibly against the claims put forward on behalf of the province at that time, he attributed this result to the fact that there was no previous census with which the census of 1881 could be compared for the purposes of subsection 4 of section 51 of the British North America Act so far as Prince Edward Island is concerned, and probably that accounts for the result in 1882. In the Bill which I am asking permission to introduce, I have left blank the number of members for the province of Prince Edward Island, and therefore the total number of members for the reason that I desire that question to be left open for consideration by the committee to whom I shall ask to have the Bill referred.

The province of Prince Edward Island has in the Senate of Canada a representation of four members. If the terms of the British North America Act were applied strictly to the province of Prince Edward Island, it would have under the Bill now to be passed by this Parliament, a representation in the House of Commons of not more than three. It is somewhat incongruous that a small province like Prince Edward Island, or, indeed, any province of Canada, should have a smaller representation in the House of Commons than in the Senate. I shall have occasion at a later stage in the session to speak of the principles which seem to have guided the fathers of Confederation in establishing the representation of the various provinces in the Senate. For the present it is sufficient to say this: that there does not seem to have been any very fixed principle in their minds, and that the result seems to have been almost purely an arbitrary one. In the United States, as hon. members of this House know, each state of the Union has a fixed representation of two in the Senate. In other federations the membership is determined not in that way, but according to the population, but I am not aware of any federation in which the membership of any province or state is less in the lower house than in the upper house. If I remember correctly the provisions of the Australian Commonwealth Act, the basis fixed in the Commonwealth of Aultralia is that each province shall, as nearly as possible, have two members in the lower house for each member that it has in the upper house.

There is another consideration, not of a legal character, and not one of controlling or determining influence, which might possibly be taken into consideration in this House in regard to the province of Prince Edward Island. I shall speak a little later of the reasons that have led both political parties in this country to fix a higher unit of representation in cities than in rural communities. That principle, of course, gives a larger representation to those who live upon the lands in this country than it does to those who dwell in cities. The reasons for that I will come to a little later, but so far as Prince Edward Island is concerned it has to be borne in mind that the population of that province is almost wholly a rural population, and that upon any basis laid down by either political party in this country and upon the basis which I hope will be laid down by the committee to whom this Bill will go, if the population of Prince Edward Island, although less than 100,000, were situated in any other province of Canada, it would have the right to a membership of at least four in the House of Commons. I do not know whether I make absolutely clear to hon. gentlemen of this House what lies in my mind, but that, I think, is the fact. If not, being limited by the terms of a constitutional act, as we are today, we were to take into consideration a rural population of nearly 100,000 in any of the other provinces in Canada, we would, I think, upon any basis that has ever been accepted or is likely to be accepted, give a representation of not less than four members to that population.

It is my duty next to lay before the House—and I do it purely for the purpose of convenience—the—the results of the census of 1911. I may say that there was a slight error in the census figures as at first published, and I think the figures here given are from the second and corrected edition of the census returns. Taken in alphabetical order, the population of the various provinces according to the last census is as follows:—Alberta, 374,663; British Columbia, 392,480, Manitoba, 455,-614; New Brunswick, 351,889; Nova Scotia, 492,338; Ontario, 2,523,274; Prince Edward Island, 93,728; Quebec, 2,003,232; Saskatchewan, 492,-432; Yukon, 8,512. Taking the population of Quebec, 2,003,232, and dividing it by 65, we obtain the unit of 30,819. Applying this unit to the populat,on of the various provinces of Canada, we find that Alberta is entitled to a membership of 12.12. The decimal is disregarded, and Al-

Continued on page 4

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