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SENATOR PROWSE
ON REDISTRIBUTION

(Continued from page 1.)

had to break over county lines, which is not a material matter at all, so far as the Island is concerned, and we made five constituencies giving to each riding one member. In a small island like this, that is much better than to have only three ridings; because it has happened in Prince Edward Island before now that every man coming from that province was on one side of politics when they came up here, which is not a desirable thing. If you have your party in power, it is all very well; but if you happen to have all the representatives of the province in opposition to the government, it will be cold justice we will get and nothing more. The division made of Prince Edward Island at that time was a fair and honest one, and one that gives universal satisfaction to the people of that province. But to go back now and establish electoral districts on county lines, and to deprive King's County, from which I come, of a member and make it suit that one member, while Queen's County has two members, under present bill, and Prince County two members is a very unfair division of the province. Queen's County has a population somewhat like 45,000; Prince, 36,000 and King's County, some 26,000. Now, the voting power of King's County approaches near to that of Prince; but King's County, under this bill, is to be satisfied with one representative, while Prince County retains the two. Why is this done for Prince Edward Island? In my opinion it is very plain to be seen. For some years past King's County has returned two Conservatives to Parliament and Queen's County has returned two Liberals and Prince generally two Liberals. Going back to County lines simply leaves Prince and Queen's with four Liberal representatives, and King's County has to be deprived of one Conservative member. I live in King's County, and in a portion of King's County, which has been lately attached to a portion of Queen's County, making the east riding of Queen's, and I am perfectly satisfied the people there feel their interests are ten times more identified with that portion of Queen's than with the other portions of King's County. When we have the railway, which is partially promised, to be extended to Murray Harbor, our interests will be still more identified with Queen's county than they are now. The hon. gentleman made another statement to this effect: It has been laid down that Parliament is perfectly justified in readjusting the constituencies where the population has increased to a very great extent between the last and the next decennial census. That may be all very true; but the circumstances would be exceptional in Canada. Such an increase is not admitted under the present bill, and why? There is one locality which is an exception at the present time, that is the great Yukon district, which has increased in population very many thousands. Why have not the present government, in this bill, given that new country a representative in Parliament? Is it because they are afraid of the results of opening a constituency there? Has the management of this government been such as to accomplish it to the people of the Yukon district? Can we come to any other conclusion than that is the real reason why they have not given Yukon a representative? We are told today the circumstances are such as would justify them in giving that district a representative. The object of the bill, we are told, is to restore the county lines. One great want is that it is not a general bill. They only restore the county lines in certain places, and they leave other sections of the country as they are at present. Where the government are going to disturb the representation of the country, they should make a general law applicable, not only for the present, but for the future. Certain principles ought to be laid down, to be strictly adhered to in the future, and in that regard the bill is a great failure. County lines is not a fundamental principle which should govern in a case of this kind. The fundamental principle of responsible government is representation by population, and that fundamental principle was strictly adhered to when confederation took place so much so that a certain number of representatives was settled and fixed for Quebec, and just in proportion to the representation for Quebec must the representation for the other provinces be. I take it that that was the fundamental principle laid down at confederation. If it is not so we do not know where we are. I do not say it is right for Parliament to adhere strictly to population in every instance, but I say it takes precedence of county lines or any other consideration and where you can keep closely to representation by population it is the safest and best course to adopt. A great deal of stress has been laid on the 51st clause of the British North America Act which has been interpreted to mean that although the principle of representation by population must apply as between the provinces, it does not apply as between counties, cities, towns, villages and electoral districts and individuals in any province. If it is a principle that we should have representation by population as between the provinces, it cannot be wrong to have representation by population within the province. If it is right in the one instance, it must be right in the other. What right have ten men in one locality to have as much voice in the government of the country as twenty men in another electoral district? It is not a sound policy, and it cannot be justified except where it is inconvenient and impossible to adjust the population exactly according to the requirements of the locality. So far as making comparison between county lines in the Dominion and county lines in Great Britain there is no just reason for making such a comparison. The counties of Great Britain, from time immemorial, have been separate institutions, and were separate nations in ancient days. They have been established

for a thousand years; but in Canada, and I speak particularly for Prince Edward Island, the county lines have no more to do with the associations of the past than township lines, and any adjustments which have been made of electoral districts in Prince Edward Island have been kept within township lines. We have heard a great deal about judges. They are to be brought in here to give this bill the appearance of justice and fair play. If there was any place where the government were not satisfied with the present redistribution of seats in a province, and where they would be justified in allowing the judges to redistribute the seats, it is Prince Edward Island; but no; there they confine the island to three electoral districts, giving two representatives to two of them, and one to the other, and the judges are not asked to make the division; but they are to run in pairs. Why is this? One reason is because the Minister of Marine and Fisheries is a prominent member of the government and controls, to some extent, the treasury, and he expects to run in one of these counties and drag another member in with him, whoever he may be. A good deal has been said in reference to the Redistribution bill which passed in 1892. It has been characterized as a Gerrymander Bill. I do not like the word "gerrymander." I do not want to apply it to this bill, and I do not think it has been applicable to any bill we have passed. We must look at the results. Let us see what the effect has been. Has it been an injury to the present government? This government went to the country in the last election with everything against them. They were returned to power by the electorate under the present adjustment. They have been some years in power, and have had an opportunity of fulfilling their pledges. They have had a majority in Parliament and in the provincial legislatures at their disposal, and they are making full use of it. They have had at their beck and nod all the officials they appointed since they came into power. Everything is in their favor for the next general election. If they go to the country with the electorate, as at present established, they ought, if they have done right while in power, to come back with a very much larger majority than they had at the last general election. At the last election, although the Redistribution bill of 1892 is complained of as being a Gerrymander bill, 191,052 Conservative votes returned forty-three members to the House of Commons, while 166,335 Liberal votes returned forty-four members in the province of Ontario. That is 24,717 fewer Liberals returned one more member than the Conservatives.

Hon. Mr. Scott.—The hon. gentleman's figures are entirely wrong.

Hon. Mr. Prowse.—I have them from very good authority, and I think they are perfectly right. With such a record as that, I do not think the hon. gentlemen are justified in calling the Act of 1892 a gerrymander. If it is a gerrymander, it is a gerrymander against the Conservative party. In the same proportion the 166,335 voters ought to have only 37 members in place of 44, or if 166,335 Liberal voters returned 44 members, then 191,052 Conservative voters ought to have returned 50 members in place of 43. Not only does the same principle hold good in reference to Ontario, but all over the Dominion there was the same result. Throughout the Dominion 413,040 Conservative votes were polled and 397,194 Liberal votes; and although the Liberals had a pretty large majority in the House yet they came in with nearly 16,000 of a minority of the total votes cast. That disposes pretty well of the charge of gerrymandering. That charge has been made through the country during the last ten years and has been made to do duty up to the present time. I do not take any stock in it myself. I do not desire to say more on this question further than this: I think it is a great mistake on the part of the government to introduce this measure at the present time. Ere long, whether this bill is passed or not, we shall have the census, which will be in 1901 and then the readjustment of the constituencies must take place in accordance with that census, and if the government of the day, before they go to the next election and before the census is taken would come to an understanding with their political opponents, or appoint a commission of some kind whereby reasonable and fair principles shall be laid down to redistribute the different seats in the Dominion, and not allow it to be left open to gerrymander or by one party or the other, it would be a fairer way in my opinion, and if an arrangement of that kind could be arrived at between the leaders of both political parties, such as would commend itself to the electors of both sides of politics, I think it would be found for the benefit of Canada, and it would remove the obnoxious question out of the arena of politics for many years to come.


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