

districts as permanent and as closely coinciding with our territorial divisions existing for other purposes, as circumstances will allow us to have them; subdividing or otherwise altering them, or erecting new ones, only as occasion may be found to require.

HON. ATTY. GEN. CARTIER—We will do that for the local parliaments.

MR. DUNKIN—Perhaps so, and perhaps not. That distinction, however, is just what I complain of. We are to change our districts for purposes of representation in the local parliaments, if we like, but not unless we like. These subdivisions of our provinces may thus, in the main, be permanent. But, for representation in the Federal Parliament we are, at each of these decennial periods, to have a general readjustment of the whole country, so as to divide each province anew into its due number of aliquot parts. This is an innovation on our usages, greatly for the worse. It goes to destroy that character of reality, convenience and stability which—if our system, as a whole, is to have such character—had need be maintained to the utmost extent practicable, in respect of our constituencies and of our minor territorial delimitations generally. This changing every ten years brings together electors who have not been in the habit of acting with each other. In England they do nothing of this sort; they do not change their limits lightly. The several bodies of men who send representatives to the Imperial House of Commons have the habit of so coming together, as bodies not likely to be broken up. We ought to keep this as an element of our Constitution, but it is carefully eliminated from it.

HON. MR. McDOUGALL—I am sure the honorable gentleman does not wish to build up an argument on a misconception of the resolutions for the purpose of misrepresentation. I am sure that he must have observed this fact, that it may, and probably will often happen, that there will be no change as to the number of members or electoral districts, and there certainly will be none if the increase of population in Lower Canada keeps pace with that in Upper Canada, and therefore the evil he complains of will not occur unless there be some different rule of increase from that which has prevailed heretofore.

MR. DUNKIN—If any one imagines that the population of the different provinces is going to increase upon any thing like the same rule, then I differ from him. I believe

there will be a very much more rapid rate of increase in some provinces than in others; a divergence between them in this respect, of the same kind, and perhaps, even to the same degree as in the case of the United States. There, in the old states, at every decennial revision, the number of representatives lessens, and in the new states it increases, and that rapidly. It is only in the comparatively few states which may be said to be neither old nor new that it remains about the same. The rule is one of change, for the country everywhere. Any escape from change is the exception. And with us, those provinces which shall be found to increase faster than Lower Canada, as some certainly will be, will re-divide their whole territory every ten years, in order to increase their number of districts; and those which increase slower will do the same, in order to cut some off. Even Lower Canada, to meet the varying rates of increase of its several parts, will be drawn into doing the same sort of thing. I shall be told, no doubt, that this need not be—that mere partial changes here and there may be made to answer the end; but I know that in the nature of things it will be, that such partial changes will not be made the rule. The sweeping rule is laid down, in the abstract, of basing representation on mere population; and that rule is sure to be followed out—not only as between the several provinces, but also as within each; and here again, not only as for Federal, but also as for provincial legislation. For all legislative purposes, we must look to have all our territorial divisions open to frequent, one might say perpetual, reconstruction; and this subject perpetually to the disturbing influences of the party warfare of the hour. The exigencies of that warfare, we may be sure, will tell; and whatever the party in the ascendant, whether in the country at large or locally, will find means in this part of our machinery for advancing its ends—means not quite of the sort to commend themselves to one's approval. (Hear, hear.) It is claimed, I know, as a merit of this scheme, that it allows a five years' term to our House of Commons, in place of the two years' term fixed for the House of Representatives. Apart from these decennial revisions, I would be glad of this. But five is the half of ten, I think; and though our Houses of Commons may often not last their full term, there will yet seldom or never, in all probability, be more than either two or three general elections held between any two decennial revisions. A less