

ures as we find them, and this is the reason why: because clause 12 of this Bill reads: 'Until the said legislature otherwise provides.' Now, the hon. minister knows perfectly well that within six months after the passage of this Bill the people of Alberta will be called upon to choose their first legislature. He knows that that legislature will be chosen on the conditions as they are to-day, or rather as they were last year, because the later comers cannot vote. He knows, therefore, that the powers given by this Bill will be exhausted with that first act of the first legislature, and from that time forward will be null and void; because there is before this House a Bill which states that in the month of June, in the year 1906, there will be a census of the population of the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba taken by the Minister of Agriculture. Now, it is perfectly well known that this legislature is to be chosen upon existing conditions, and that one of the first acts of this legislature, after the census of 1906 becomes public, will be if necessary, to carry out a distribution of seats. He knows that hereafter the newly created legislature will be the sole authority to divide the province of Alberta for local electoral purposes. Six months from this time the powers given in this Bill will practically cease to exist, consequently this prospective increase is a matter we have no right to discuss. Then, the minister tells us that one railroad is coming in this year, that another is coming in two years, and another in three years. We have to deal with actual facts as they are, and hence discounting the future is not pertinent to the discussion.

Now, I think I have shown that there are a great many different considerations which have to be weighed when a province is about to be divided into constituencies, and I think we shall realize as a House that we are not adapted for dealing with questions of that character. With all due deference to the knowledge and good intentions of the members of this House, I submit that a division of that character is one that should be made by an independent judicial body which has some knowledge of local conditions. There are 215 members of this House. How many of these have ever been in Alberta or know anything about the local conditions there? Here we have a very important measure affecting the interests of probably 200,000 people. Is there any bar provided before which these people can come and be heard and make their grievances known? This is a matter which should be given the fullest possible discussion, and the people vitally interested should be given an opportunity to be heard. But no such opportunity is now given them. Further than that, with all due deference to parliament, I do not think it can be characterized as a wholly non-partisan body.

I do not think the members of this House are likely to approach this question having absolutely divested themselves of political bias. This Bill has been presented in a very simple way. One man fathers it, his views are imposed upon the cabinet, the cabinet having accepted them, force them upon the party, and the party having a majority in parliament forces it upon the country. That is one-man-rule in a matter so important as this which relates to the future of 200,000 people. Now I submit that is not the manner in which a question of this importance should be dealt with. We desire to have a commission appointed of men of wide knowledge and of legal training, men who have given their lives to weighing judicial questions, and are prepared to deal with them in an impartial way, men before whom these people interested can come and plead their cause; and when that tribunal has been provided we of the opposition are perfectly willing to accept without a murmur the finding, whatever it may be. The minister has intimated that his finding would pass a board of judges. If it passes a board of judges, there will be nothing further said. But I am very much mistaken if there are three judges in any province of the Dominion who would accept after hearing all the evidence, the schedule which the minister has submitted.

There is another point which comes out in this discussion. We have seen statements made and challenged, figures offered and refuted. Where are we? Who is right? Who has counted these figures correctly? Simply the majority. They may be wrong, it is possible for a majority to be wrong. But if there were a commission of judges to weigh the statements of all parties which might be submitted to them, who would be in a position to examine witnesses and documents, and be able to obtain full information, they would then decide where the truth lay, and would act accordingly.

Now I want to submit some evidence to prove that commissions have been tried elsewhere and have proved most successful. We, as a part of the British Empire, cannot do badly in following some of our sister colonies in their manner of dealing with questions of this character. We have been accustomed especially to look to Australia for experiments relating to the ballot law, and all things electoral. We have taken our ballot system from that country. Now suppose we consult them relating to legislation of this kind. Some twenty years ago, in New Zealand, it was decided that the fairest possible way to distribute constituencies was to leave it to a commission. In 1892 New South Wales followed the example of New Zealand, and at that time the Hon. R. E. O'Connor, who introduced a government measure, thus spoke of the way in which the system had worked in New Zealand:

The principle of the schedule of electorates is open to very great objection, and the principle