

GROSS GERRYMANDER TO HELP THE TORIES

Liberals Denounce Redistribution Bill in Legislature — Flagrant Cases in Bruce and Grey—Slight Changes Made

Only two changes were allowed by the Redistribution Committee yesterday in the draft schedules submitted by the Government. The town of Strathroy will not be moved from the riding of North Middlesex to the riding of West Middlesex. Middlesex county will remain as it is. The town of Port Dalhousie will be placed in the riding of East Lincoln, not West Lincoln.

There was a strong protest from the Liberals over the cutting up of Bruce county. Mr. Bowman pointed out that the necessity for touching Bruce at all was in the imagination of the Government. The effect, of course, was to wipe out Centre Bruce, make a solid Liberal riding of West Bruce, and try and convert the North and South ridings into Conservative seats. He showed that Centre Bruce with a population of 14,359, according to the last census, was by no means the smallest riding in the Province. There were eight other ridings with a smaller population than Centre Bruce, the smallest being West Durham, with 12,110, while in respect of the number of voters Bruce was ahead of many ridings with a larger population.

Carving up of Bruce.

The cutting up of Bruce county from one end to the other, as proposed, would disturb all political organizations which had existed ever since Bruce was a county. By looking at the map one could easily see the anomaly created. West Bruce starts at Southampton, away in the north of the peninsula, and runs as far south as Lucknow. With the exception of two municipalities all sections of the proposed new riding gave Liberal majorities at the last Provincial election ranging from 8 to 291, and on the basis of that vote the Liberal majority would now be 1,021. The gerrymander would give, by the same method of figuring, a Conservative majority of about 243 in the North riding and 7 in the South riding.

Penalizing the Liberals.

"You are simply penalizing the County of Bruce because it committed the crime at the last election of returning three Liberals," said Mr. Rowell in a vigorous denunciation of the proposals. Six years ago when a redistribution measure was up there were two Conservatives in the House from Bruce county and one Liberal and there was no suggestion of a change. "The proposals of the Government now constitute a gerrymander of the grossest character."

Mr. Lucas replied that every word that Mr. Rowell had said about the hiving of Liberals in Bruce could be said in the reverse about the hiving of Conservatives in Kent and Lambton counties.

Dealing with the situation in Toronto, Mr. Rowell said there was absolutely no excuse for perpetuating the 'A' and 'B' seats. There was no reason why Toronto should not be treated as every other section of the Province and subdivided so as to give each member a seat of his own. The only reason for retaining the existing

arrangement was, if possible, to prevent the Liberals having a representative from the city of Toronto.

How would it help if each member had his own seat? Mr. Lucas asked.

Absurd Proposals for Toronto.

Because it was not possible to subdivide Toronto into ten seats fairly without giving the Liberals an opportunity to win one or more of the seats, replied Mr. Rowell. Even Conservative newspapers were protesting against the perpetuating of the present method. In support of this he quoted from *The Toronto World*: "It is rather a melancholy reflection for Conservatives that the party does not feel strong enough in Toronto to risk such an arrangement of the Provincial ridings as would give every citizen the same chance with his vote that other citizens have in other constituencies of the Province."

Mr. Rowell submitted an amendment to the Toronto clauses that the city be subdivided so as to give each riding one member, but it was voted down.

Gerrymander in Grey.

Coming to Grey county, the Liberal leader said that what was being done in North Grey was to take out two municipalities, one of which was under local option and the other without a license, and which together gave a Liberal majority, and in place of these they were putting into North Grey two municipalities that had a substantial Conservative majority and had both voted against local option. As it now stands North Grey has no license whatever, and the only object of this shifting of population in North Grey was to endeavor to prevent the Liberals regaining the riding at the next general election.

In South Grey, Mr. Rowell pointed out, there was a substantial Conservative majority. The changes were to transfer municipalities which gave a Conservative majority in the last election to the South riding to lessen the chances of the Liberals winning that seat.

Jockeying in Victoria.

Victoria was another instance, declared the Liberal leader, where the Government was jockeying for position. The new arrangement is to be North and South, which is accomplished by taking out of the old riding of West Victoria two municipalities which gave a Liberal majority in the last election of over 100, and in the place of these it was proposed to put four municipalities in which the Conservative majority is about 150. The Liberal candidate in the last election had moved to Lindsay. He formerly lived in the rural parts of the riding, where his support was the strongest. The changes to be made were clearly to manoeuvre him out of this support.

Covering these objections formal amendments were moved by different Liberal members, but were voted down in each case.

In respect of the changes in Essex, Mr. Bowman moved that Amherstburk and Malden be transferred from North Essex to South Essex, but this also was not allowed.

The bill is now to be reported to the House, where the fight against the gerrymander will be continued.