

REDISTRIBUTION PLAN SUGGESTED BY DRURY MAY CAUSE EXPLOSION

Proposes Four Unit Classifications, Cutting Urban Representation and Increasing Rural Representation in Legislature—Conservative Leader Demands Delay of Second Reading

CURRIE OBSTRUCTS NAMING COMMITTEE

Southeast Toronto Member Sees Effort to "Gag" Discussion—Premier Disavows Intention to Gerrymander—Refutes Assertion Group Government Has Failed; Says Ontario Has Had No Such Thing

Premier Drury's suggestion of a "fair and equitable" distribution of Ontario electoral ridings involves four distinct unit of representation classifications. His proposal in the House yesterday of a higher unit for Toronto than for any other district brought an intimation of future protest from Hon. G. H. Ferguson, Conservative Leader, and a definite announcement of opposition from John A. Currie, Conservative member for Southeast Toronto, which the latter member carried so far as to obstruct the official naming of the Redistribution Committee.

Unit Highest for Toronto.

As intimated in The Globe some days ago, the Government's suggestion—and presumably it will be pressed before the Redistribution Committee by the eleven Government members—is that the unit of electoral representation in the Legislature be set highest for Toronto, and lowest for New Ontario.

Cities other than Toronto, according to Hon. Mr. Drury's idea, would have a higher unit of representation than older rural Ontario, and older rural Ontario, in turn, have a higher unit of representation than newer rural Ontario.

Although the Premier intended to have his redistribution bill given second reading without discussion yesterday, his enunciation of a proposed new principle in representation brought from the Conservative Leader a request for postponement of second reading. He desired to say something about the bill on Monday.

Blocks House Approval.

John A. Currie was much more vigorous. Interpreting the intention to be one of departure from what he deemed the good old principle of representation by population, he said he would not only oppose second reading today, but also the House approval of the committee, which, in the absence of the unanimous consent of the House, had to stand over as a notice of motion.

The Redistribution Committee, however, was named by the Premier, and is as follows: Chairman, Hon. Nelson Parliament; Government members (11), Messrs. Drury, Grant, Rollo, Homuth, Heenan, Watson, Oke, McDonald, Lethbridge, Johnston (Simcoe), Taylor; Liberals (5),

Messrs. Brackin, Mageau, Marshall, Clarke, McLeod; Conservatives (5), Messrs. McCrear, Nickle, Cooke, Price and Henry; Independents (1), MacBride.

Fight on Redistribution.

The whole tenor of yesterday's brief discussions, upon mere suggestion of second reading of a blank redistribution bill, indicates a stiff fight ahead over the question of redistribution of Ontario electoral divisions. Mr. Ferguson's desire for adjournment was plainly the result of suggestion of the four unit classifications, and, presumably, the Conservative party will not be in accord with the proposed differentiation in representation strength in various sections.

That there is a general recognition of the possibility of redistribution discussions resulting in a blow-up in the House before dissolution date—May 4—is reached, was evidenced by the comments of the Premier upon Mr. Currie's obstruction move, and Mr. Ferguson's prompt demand that Mr. Drury should not place the Conservative party in an improper light because of it.

Suggests Four Classifications.

"The bill is a bill in blank," said the Premier, "in moving for second reading of the Redistribution Bill. I think that probably in consideration in the committee, the committee ought to consider carefully the matter of the numbers of people that should be entitled to representation in the various sections of the Province. I am putting this forward merely as a suggestion. I think there ought to be at least four classifications as to the unit of population, because, of course, the object of representation at all is to get the views of the people represented in the Legislature, and in the consideration of the Government. Obviously there is such a thing as a metropolitan district. A population immediately surrounding the seat of Government, which, because of nearness, because of close touch with the Government, because, perhaps, of possession of a metropolitan Press, requires a lesser need for representation than districts not so favorably situated.

Says Toronto Needs no Members.

"For that reason, I think our highest unit of representation ought to apply to the city of Toronto, which is close, and which, quite frankly, would be quite well cared for without representation. That, I think, is inevitable. I think there ought to be, in fairness to the rest of the Province, a unit larger than for the rest of the Province, because of nearness, and the metropolitan Press.

"Then the unit applying to urban municipalities, urban ridings, because of not being so close to the seat of government, they are in need of greater representation in proportion to their population. They, however, are more powerful in voicing their views than other parts, because they possess newspapers to mould opinion, and it is easy for them to place their views in that way before the public and Government and receive consideration.

"Beyond that, I think, we should consider a rural unit for older Ontario. There we must, of course, take account of many complex circumstances. I think we should not, any more than we can help, disturb county boundaries. Obviously we ought to keep our ridings as closely as possible forming county boundaries, and there should be a smaller unit of representation than is found in the urban districts, and smaller than is found in the metropolitan area.

Small Unit for Remote Areas.

"And further, I think, we should consider a still smaller unit of representation for ridings in the northern parts of the country, particularly rural ridings in New Ontario, because there we have not only distances from the seat of Government, not only lack of a Press which finds its way into the hands of a greater

proportion of our people, but vast distances, and interests scattered over wide territory.

"I am giving that as my thought. The Government has no desire to do anything like a gerrymander. That is the reason we are referring the bill to a committee composed as it is."

The Premier deviated for a moment to refer to a newspaper editorial dealing with the failure of group government, and denied that Ontario had such a thing. Ontario, he thought, had a new party, and not a number of groups. His assurance to the House and country was that the Government introduced the bill in the interests of farmers. The Government did not desire to juggle the dice to its own advantage.

Mr. Ferguson's Objections.

Hon. Mr. Ferguson said that the Prime Minister, quite properly, had undertaken to announce certain principles that should be followed as the basis of redistribution. He did not think, however, that was a matter for the committee at all. "I think," he said, "the House should give direction to the committee as to the line that is to be followed and the principle underlying the scheme of redistribution. I think further than that—and in this principle I disagree with the Prime Minister—that just as any other piece of legislation, the Government has responsibility in the final analysis for the result. The Government should give leadership and direction.

As to the Premier's four-unit classifications proposal, the Conservative Leader thought that it should receive consideration at the hands of the House, and for that reason he asked postponement of second reading until Monday, when he would be prepared to speak to the new suggestion. The committee could not sit Monday, anyway, he reminded, so no time would be lost in consequence.

Premier Drury, in reply, referred to redistribution procedure at the last British House of Commons committee, when the committee decided on a general plan and reported back to the House.

Not a Parallel Case.

The Conservative Leader, however, responded that that body was a specially appointed commission, and the cases were not parallel. If Ontario's special committee did not get broad, general instructions, he did not know when it might get through with redistribution. He reiterated his statement that redistribution was more than mere consideration of populations and boundaries.

"I quite understand," he said, "that the Premier was not using in the literal sense the expression that Toronto should not have representation at all, but it is an indication to the committee of what my honorable friend's attitude is, and the same with the other suggestions. I don't know that his argument about urban unit—Hamilton, Windsor, Ottawa and other places—is sound. I can see at the moment some fairly good ground for differing from my hon. friend."

Speaking for the Liberal party, in the absence of F. W. Hay, Sam Clarke, Northumberland, declared that in his opinion it would be unwise to commence dictating to the special committee. They were supposed to make a survey of the whole Province, in regard to all governing conditions.

Sees Effort to Apply Gag.

J. A. Currie said: "An effort is being made to gag any discussion of this bill, and it is being sent to committee. I want to say the bill contains certain principles to which I do not intend to adhere, and which I intend to debate on the second reading. One is contained in clause four, which is virtually an instruction to the committee to insert proportional representation in certain portions of the Province. The other is the question of metropolitan area. That is in distinct violation of the principle that was adopted by this Legislature many years ago, that was fought out by