

The House of Commons.—The British North America Act, 1867 provided that in respect of representation in the House of Commons the Province of Quebec should have the fixed number of sixty-five members and that there should be assigned to each of the other provinces such a number of members as would bear the same proportion to the number of its population as the number sixty-five bears to the number of the population of Quebec. This Act also provided that on the completion of a census in 1871 and of each subsequent decennial census the representation of the several provinces should be re-adjusted from time to time provided the proportionate representation of the provinces as prescribed by the Act were not thereby disturbed.

In the session of 1946 the House of Commons adopted a resolution stating that the effect of the provisions of the British North America Act relating to representation had not been satisfactory in that proportionate representation of the provinces according to population had not been maintained and that a more equitable apportionment of members to the various provinces could be effected if readjustments were made on the basis of the population of all the provinces taken as a whole. The Act was amended accordingly in 1946 to provide a new rule to regulate representation in the House of Commons. Generally speaking, representation was fixed as follows:—

The membership assigned to each province shall be computed by dividing the total population of the provinces by two hundred and fifty-four and by dividing the population of each province by the quotient so obtained.

This rule, employed in the redistribution of representation made in 1947, was effective in the General Election of 1949.

After the completion of the 1951 Census it was apparent that as a result of a wartime shift of population a substantial reduction in the representation of the Province of Saskatchewan would ensue under the rules then regulating representation. Accordingly, in an effort to eliminate sharp reductions in provincial representation from one census to another, the British North America Act was again amended to provide representation on the following basis:—

“Sect. 51.—(1) Subject as hereinafter provided, the number of members of the House of Commons shall be two hundred and sixty-three and the representation of the provinces therein shall forthwith upon the coming into force of this section and thereafter on the completion of each decennial census be readjusted by such authority, in such manner, and from such time as the Parliament of Canada from time to time provides, subject and according to the following rules:—

“1. There shall be assigned to each of the provinces a number of members computed by dividing the total population of the provinces by two hundred and sixty-one and by dividing the population of each province by the quotient so obtained, disregarding, except as hereinafter in this section provided, the remainder, if any, after the said process of division.

“2. If the total number of members assigned to all the provinces pursuant to rule one is less than two hundred and sixty-one, additional members shall be assigned to the provinces (one to a province) having remainders in the computation under rule one commencing with the province having the largest remainder and continuing with the other provinces in the order of the magnitude of their respective remainders until the total number of members assigned is two hundred and sixty-one.

“3. Notwithstanding anything in this section, if upon completion of a computation under rules one and two, the number of members to be assigned to a province is less than the number of senators representing the said province, rules one and two shall cease to apply in respect of the said province, and there shall be assigned to the said province a number of members equal to the said number of senators.

“4. In the event that rules one and two cease to apply in respect of a province then, for the purpose of computing the number of members to be assigned to the provinces in respect of which rules one and two continue to apply, the total population of the provinces shall be reduced by the number of the population of the province in respect of which rules one and two have ceased to apply and the number two hundred and sixty-one shall be reduced by the number of members assigned to such province pursuant to rule three.

“5. On any such readjustment the number of members for any province shall not be reduced by more than fifteen per cent below the representation to which such province was entitled under rules one to four of this subsection at the last preceding readjustment of the representation of that province, and there shall be no reduction in the representation of any province as a result of which that province would have a smaller number of members