

confidently that the anti-inflationary policy his Government has pursued will result in the parties opposed to the Labour party receiving great support from the electors in the Commonwealth sphere.

Mr. GALVIN.—I am referring to the statement that the Prime Minister made in the House of Representatives that there will be a redistribution of Victorian Federal electorates.

Mr. OLDHAM.—I desire to avoid personalities and I will not be drawn into them by the Chief Secretary. I conclude by saying this: The great problem so far as electoral representation in the State Parliament of Victoria is concerned is to see that we have a true reflex of the community as a whole. There are in the ambit of the Constitution of the State of Victoria very important matters entrusted to the care of this Parliament—education, health, transport, social services, and many others of an intimate nature. Those are subjects on which it is necessary for the members of the State Parliament to have the closest contact with those whom they represent. Matters within our care are much more closely associated with the ordinary daily needs and requirements of the average electors than are many subjects of a more Australian concern, such as defence and the like, which come within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Parliament. Therefore it is essential, I believe, that there should be the closest contact between the State members and their constituents throughout the vast areas of Victoria. That seems to be the essential problem which is to be solved when a Bill dealing with electoral distribution is under the consideration of this House. I feel these topics are worthy of the utmost attention from members of all parties. If we approach this problem in a fair-minded spirit, forgetting what might have happened in the past and looking only to the present and future welfare of this State, I feel certain that the House will arrive at a solution which will be in the best interests of the citizens of this State.

Mr. LIND (Mildura).—During my speech I should like honorable members to keep in mind that under the two-for-

one plan of redistribution I am putting forward a proposal that could affect me as much as any other member, if not more so. I desire to show my sincerity in submitting my idea. Still, I am prepared to fight for my political existence on our scheme, and the justice of the case heartens me considerably.

I should like to give a *résumé* of the voting strengths recorded at various periods in the history of Victoria. I have obtained the figures from official files and believe them to be accurate. In 1853 when this Colony's constitution was drafted, it pleaded for equalizing the electorates as far as possible. That was in a time when distances had to be covered in a slow manner, population was sparse, and communications and transport were almost non-existent. In 1888 an anti-Labour Premier, Mr. Duncan Gillies, considered a fair ratio was 100 city electors to 76 country electors. In 1903 Sir William Irvine's Act set the ratio at 100 to 73. Then the great Tory "Argyle blot" of 1926 reduced the ratio to 100 to 47, and in the process knocked out eleven Labour seats.

I have made a survey of the enrolments and a comparison between the metropolitan and country electorates during the last three redistributions. After the 1903 redistribution the first election was held on the 1st of June, 1904, when there were twenty metropolitan seats, five urban and 40 country seats. The latter, incidentally, included Brighton. They gave a ratio of 100 to 73. The last election conducted under the 1903 redistribution took place on the 26th of June, 1924. A period of twenty years had elapsed, and the ratio of quotas had fallen to 100 to 41. That disparity brought about another redistribution in 1926. The first election was conducted on the 9th of April, 1927 and the ratio was 100 to 47. The last election under that redistribution occurred on the 12th of June, 1943, and the ratio had reached the all-time low of 100 to 39. The 1944 redistribution introduced a ratio of 100 to 57, which is shockingly undemocratic. It provided for 32 metropolitan, three urban and 30 country seats. The last election gave a ratio of 100 to 62. This is the history of the

ratios. Only on one occasion has the ratio improved in favour of the city or metropolitan populace.

During the political upheaval last year Melbourne's four daily newspapers wholeheartedly supported the proposals advanced by the Labour party and certain members of the Liberal party under the leadership of the present member for Glen Iris. I should like to quote several statements from the leading articles. On the 27th of February, 1952, the *Age* stated—

The Liberal and Country party cannot seriously expect public endorsement of its plans to redistribute State electoral boundaries. There is nothing new in the proposals the party is putting forward, and there is little reason to believe that the true purpose of the redistribution would be any different from that of other parties which have sponsored similar plans in other days.

The redistribution of electoral boundaries in this State in the last 30 years is mostly a record of rank political dishonesty.

There is only one honest and democratic method of dealing with redistribution. It is to adopt the basic principle of the Federal system of equality of voting, combined with an automatic periodical redistribution according to population growth and movement as revealed by the census.

Divisions could be made in this way in Victoria. They would put an end to a political practice which is repugnant to electors, and create a position where a party favoured by the majority could be elected in its own right.

In a leading article, the *Age* of the 13th of May, 1952, stated—

Until Victoria can emerge from a state of fair words and good intentions about redistribution and get a Government and a Parliament that is both workable and representative, its progress will be slow. There is no enthusiasm to-day for clever compromises and quaint coalitions.

On the 21st of November, 1952, a leading article published in the *Age* stated—

Parliament ought to reflect the ebb and flow of public opinion through the medium of majority rule, not minority rule. To those who believe in democratic principles, therefore, the proposed electoral reform plan is not, as its critics contend, something designed to injure the State or any portion of the State. It is a proposal that will put Victoria on the same level for the purposes of parliamentary representation as Victoria's Federal members of Parliament have been accustomed to for many years.

What is wrong with that? And what is wrong with a plan that enables the majority of electors in the State to secure a majority of members in the Legislative Assembly? If that is not an essential element of democratic government, it would be difficult to understand what is truly representative government.

The *Herald*, of the 21st of November, 1952, stated in a leading article—

Government in Victoria, for more than twenty years, has either been unstable or has achieved a temporary stability at the price of compromises in which one or other of the major parties has stifled its conscience. There have been shameless bargains, dizzying somersaults.

The redistribution plan embodied in the Electoral Districts Bill is as simple as it is democratic, and it is difficult to imagine any fair-minded person opposing it. It is particularly hard to understand the opposition of the Liberal and Country party, for, judging by votes cast at the Federal election, if the 1949 Legislative Assembly election had been contested according to the two-for-one plan, the result would have been as follows—Liberal and Country party, 34; Labour party, 26; Country party, 6. There would have been an absolute majority of two for the Liberal and Country party or, more marked still, a majority of fourteen for the anti-Labour parties. The Assembly election in the year 1951, based on the Federal figures, would also have resulted in a majority for the anti-Labour parties, on my hypothesis. Therefore, it is not easy to understand why the Opposition parties oppose this electoral move when the Liberal and Country party and the Country party regard the Federal distribution as fair and just.

I propose to quote figures which indicate clearly why the Country party does not favour this democratic form of redistribution of electoral boundaries. Honorable members must rid their minds of propaganda placed before them during the last election campaign. We are not elected to this House to represent trees, cattle, sheep, vines, shops, factories, or broad acres, but to represent people. A glance at the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights will confirm my contention in no uncertain terms. Its preamble begins—

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Article 1 states—

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 21 states—

(1) Every one has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Every one has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Our community is integrated, as is our economy, and each one of us is dependent upon the others. The question arising in a discussion of the Bill is not a city versus country matter, although such a contention was expressed during the recent election campaign. Many country persons agreed with the Labour party's proposals, as witness the fact that eight or nine members on the Government side of the House now represent country electorates. In those districts the Labour candidates voiced to the best of their ability their views on the two-for-one redistribution plan.

The Labour party denies the right of the Country party to claim that it can represent country interests in a better fashion than can members of the Labour party. Further, the Labour party denies the right of the Country party to govern when it represents only a sectional interest. The number and nature of seats contested by Country party candidates shows conclusively that that party represents only one section, whereas the Labour party and another political party in the House go into the four corners of the State, almost to every village and hamlet, to enunciate their policies.

Mr. Lind.

I intend to cite figures indicating the reason why the Country party does not approve of the Labour party's plan. In the 1947 Assembly election Labour polled 41 per cent. of the total votes cast, and won seventeen seats, or 26 per cent of the total number of seats. The Liberal and Country party gained 37 per cent of the votes cast and won 27 seats, or 41.5 per cent. The Country party received 15 per cent. of the votes cast and gained 20 seats, or 31 per cent.

At the Assembly election conducted in the year 1950, the Country party polled 11 per cent. of the votes cast and gained thirteen seats, which represented 20 per cent. of the number of seats in the House. In the 1952 election, the total vote polled by the Country party was 82,195, or 8.8 per cent. of the votes cast. That party won twelve seats, or 18.5 per cent. of the total number. In the figures I have quoted, uncontested seats must be taken into consideration.

There has been a cry for redistribution of Legislative Assembly seats on the two-for-one basis. I submit that the two-for-one principle operates already—two-for-one in favour of the Country party, which gets two seats for every one to which it is entitled, according to the votes cast—if consideration is given to the Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which I quoted.

In the year 1944 the then Chief Secretary—the honorable member for Gippsland South—brought in a Bill to reduce country representation from 39 to 33 seats and to increase metropolitan representation from 26 to 32 seats. He did so only because he was forced to, and a perusal of *Hansard* will reveal that the honorable member damned his Bill with faint praise. I shall refer to a table quoted by the honorable member in his second-reading speech. It indicates the sorry state reached before each previous redistribution.

Immediately before 1926, Victoria was divided into 65 electoral districts, comprising 21 metropolitan, five urban, and 39 country electorates. Taking into consideration the number of seats, the quotas and enrolments, the ratio of city to country enrolments was 100 to 36. The ratio was increased to 100 to 47, and

it remained at that figure after Parliament had decided the quotas for the following years. By the 30th of June, 1944, the ratio had fallen in three progressive stages from 100 to 47, 100 to 44, and then 100 to 39.

That fact showed that there was need then for electoral reform, and the need is equally great at present. The result of the redistribution of 1944 gave us a ratio of 100 to 57, which was an improvement, but I am sure that nobody would agree that it was very democratic. The election on the 6th of December, 1952 proved that my friend, the honorable member for Ballarat, is only half the man that I am, because he is only one in 22,000, whereas I am one in 14,000. That election also indicated that my equally loyal and intelligent friend, the honorable member for Dandenong, is only one-third of the man that I am, and that he is only half the man the honorable member for Ballarat is, being one in 46,000 in his electorate. If such stupidities are allowed to continue, chaos must eventually result. There was only one bright spot. My illustrious uncle, the honorable member for Gippsland East, has maintained the family tradition by having a vote of the same value as my own, a full value vote.

I am sure that our proposals will simplify considerably the electoral problems of Victoria, and that aspect should appeal to all citizens. The Assembly district of Glen Iris, for instance, has four subdivisions, each of which is in a different Federal division, namely, Chisholm, La Trobe, Henty, and Higgins. The Assembly district of Clifton Hill is also in several Federal divisions.

There will still be a margin to allow for natural regions, community of interest, area of country electorates, and such like, but that margin will be limited to not more than 55 per cent., nor less than 45 per cent. It will not be, as were some of our earlier blots, a margin such as 15 per cent. more or 15 per cent. less, and even more elasticity where a Government so desired. I am sure that former Governments did desire to exercise those percentages of elasticity to their own advantage. Gippsland East was once

much more than 15 per cent. less than its true quota. Our two-for-one proposals will obviate such happenings.

The size of the proposed electorates should occasion little or no worry in these days of fast transport and rapid communications, especially when it is borne in mind that members of the House of Representatives in the Federal sphere represent satisfactorily electorates twice the size of those proposed by our party. There are other reasons why this Government's two-for-one plan should be brought into operation, not the least of which is that Labour has 137,000 surplus votes in the industrial suburbs and the Liberal and Country party has 52,000 surplus votes in the metropolitan area. This fact means, of course, that nearly 200,000 citizens are disfranchised.

In Victoria, the Labour party needs 56 per cent. of the votes to win an election, and it will still need 53 per cent. if city and country electorates are made approximately the same size. This is, of course, because so much of the Labour vote goes into the huge majorities in the industrial suburbs. The distribution of Federal electorates in Victoria is still weighted between 10 per cent. and 15 per cent. in favour of the country voter, against Labour. It actually gives a bonus, which might be called a bogus vote, to a section. Nevertheless, the Government is prepared to concede that advantage as an act of good faith, if nothing else. I believe our proposal will commend itself to every thinking democrat. This is the first real opportunity in 100 years of parliamentary life in Victoria to give our citizens something approaching electoral justice.

In conclusion, I again quote from the *Melbourne Age*—

Making all allowance for a Ministry which lives on a coalition with Conservatism, the proposals as foreshadowed yesterday are reactionary beyond everything circumstances can justify What it proposes to do is not in the interests of the people but purely and in order to placate country members whose constituencies are over-represented and who are not willing to have them deleted from the statute-book. . . . In other words the country representative is to have 41 per cent. advantage on the town member. The varied suggestion is almost

an unthinkable monstrosity. Such a Bill if it ever comes to be seriously proposed should be scouted as one for the whole disfranchisement of one section of the people and giving double voting power to another. It is almost impossible to believe that any set of Ministers in any circumstances can contemplate the perpetration of such an iniquity against the equal suffrages of the people.

I did not mention the date of that quotation—it was the 15th of November, 1913! Is it not a damning indictment of our previous so-called electoral reforms that similar leading articles had cause and need to be written 40 years later? Apparently Victoria has made but little progress since 1913. This is a favourable opportunity for Victoria to take on stable and able government, and this Government will give it to our great State.

Mr. DODGSHUN (Rainbow).—At the outset, I desire to congratulate the honorable member for Mildura upon the courage and, might I say, the audacity he displayed in making his maiden speech in this House; also upon his deep conservatism. Since I have been a member of this House, I have never heard a more conservative speech given by any young member. In my view, the honorable member has sung his swan song, so far as the Mildura seat is concerned. I shall try to explain later what I mean by that statement. On no grounds whatever can he claim to have a mandate from his electors for this iniquitous, so-called two-for-one proposal, because the Mildura seat has, for many years past, been won by narrow majorities by either one party or another. My erstwhile colleague, Mr. Allnutt, won that seat once by nine or ten votes and, on another occasion, he won it by approximately 100 votes. I think honorable members will recall that Mr. Barclay won the seat by about twenty votes only and he lost it at the last Assembly election by 100 votes or thereabout. In the light of those figures, the present member for Mildura cannot claim to have a mandate from the electors.

Conversely, I believe I can claim to have received a mandate from the electors whom I represent to oppose this Bill. No one could have any doubt about where I stood concerning the proposal. I was

returned at the last Assembly election, unopposed. Neither the Labour party nor the Liberal party saw fit to submit a candidate to contest the Rainbow seat. When the Chief Secretary explained this Bill, he said he wanted to relate something of its genesis. We members of the Country party are unequivocally opposed to the principles contained in this measure and we do not intend to compromise in any way. The two-for-one proposal was born in an infamous manner; it was bred in perfidy, in circumstances of which members should be ashamed. Those circumstances constituted a reason for the appointment of a Royal Commission. As I proceed, I hope to direct the attention of the honorable member for Mildura and that of his colleagues to their own principles. I shall touch upon those principles because the Chief Secretary said that he did not waive any principles when he brought in the Bill. When moving the second-reading of the measure the honorable gentleman digressed from his notes and spoke more or less *ex tempore*. Possibly, he would have been on a relatively fair basis if he had adhered to his notes.

The honorable member for Mildura read leading articles from metropolitan newspapers, but I know that he did not complete them, because we members of the Country party can almost quote them verbatim. Some of the statements contained in those leading articles concerning the ascendancy of the Country party to control during the last session of the Victorian Parliament are untrue. If a metropolitan daily newspaper attempts to lead public opinion, it should at least state the truth. Those who know the full story concerning the two-for-one proposal are conscious of the fact that it is an anomalous and iniquitous scheme that is being foisted upon Victorian citizens. Members of the Country party know full well that the proposed scheme is as anomalous as is the present electoral set-up. There are nearly 60,000 electors in one Federal electorate whereas, in the Mallee electorate for the House of Representatives there are only 37,000 voters. If the scheme proposed by the Government becomes law, there will be approximately 19,000 in each of the two State electorates contained within the Federal