

proportional representation works in practice for Australian Senate elections. It was argued that if we were to talk on the spot with politicians and others in Australia, the disadvantages we perceive in proportional representation in general, and in the single transferable vote in particular, would not seem so formidable. In any event, the time available to our Committee for its investigations and for essential travel in Canada was not sufficient to allow us to make the trip and to meet even our extended deadline. We do recognize, however, that a comprehensive review of alternative electoral systems for the Canadian Senate should ideally include an on-the-spot examination of the system used in Australia.

### **Constituency boundaries**

While voters in each senatorial constituency would elect only one representative, as is the case in House of Commons elections, we do not believe that constituency boundaries should be determined according to the same principles of population equality. Senators should represent natural, identifiable communities. Although population should be one criterion in determining the boundaries of Senate electoral districts, greater importance should be attached to geographic, community, linguistic and cultural factors than is the case for House of Commons constituencies. In readjusting the federal electoral map, larger discrepancies in the average number of electors could be tolerated than those authorized in the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*. At present Quebec is divided into 24 senatorial districts, the boundaries of which were delineated in 1856. They no longer have much relation to contemporary realities and should be abolished. New districts would be created in Quebec as in the other provinces. Senate electoral districts, like those of the Commons, should not extend beyond the geographic limits of a province or territory.

It would be necessary periodically to readjust Senate constituency boundaries. Since this task would require political judgement, we propose that independent commissions prepare proposals for constituency boundaries in accordance with criteria specified in the law, but that the final delineation be done by an act of Parliament. Parliament would then have an opportunity to amend the proposals made by the commissions. However, the initial distribution for the first elections to the Senate should be done by a special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons.

### **The senatorial term and the timing of elections**

We recognized that in choosing single-member constituencies we had to ensure that the role of elected senators would be quite clearly different from that of members of the House of Commons. Our proposal to restrict senators to a single term of office does this and achieves some other important objectives. If senators are not able to seek re-election they will have more independence of party influence and greater freedom to speak out as regional representatives, they will be less likely to get involved in the kind of constituency duties that would duplicate those of members of the House of Commons, and they would be able to devote most of their energies to sittings of the Senate and its committees.