

*Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension*

many other people it would be a logical move of the Canadian people to say, "Let us take up the rails of the railway which was part of the deal by which one province became part of Canada while at the same time we made the deal in respect of the minimum number of seats for other areas of Canada." This was a contractual agreement entered into by a responsible government.

Having said that, I think it is only fair to add that just because there are a minimum number of seats in certain provinces does not mean there should not be a minimum number in other provinces. I submit there should be, and that part of the redistribution program outlined in this bill should assure a minimum number of seats for certain areas of Canada which find themselves losing representation on our strictly representation by population structure.

I am not one of those who would in any way wish to say that we should not have representation by population in Canada. However, I am one of those who say that when the question is presented clearly and fairly to Canadian citizens, I do not believe anyone in Canada today would fail to recognize that when you try throughout this nation to arrive at a one vote, one person proposition, no matter how one is represented it must be vote for vote, person for person. The people of the cities should be given to understand—I am sure they do not comprehend the complications of rural representation in respect of distance—some of the pleas made in this House based on the so-called "rep by pop" argument. They should consider the fact that a member of this House stated that in perhaps five minutes he could walk across his constituency, and in 15 or 20 minutes could walk its length.

Let us consider the vast areas of the rural country and consider the amount of time a rural representative spends in travelling from one part of his constituency to another. We must consider the consumption of that amount of time in relation to the opportunity of a member to see his constituents, or for his constituents to see him. There are also more factors to be considered than just a one person, one vote basis for the distribution of seats in Canada.

If at any time in Canada's future it must be one vote, one person then it will become absolutely necessary that special consideration be given to constituents and their representation in rural areas, so they can in effect be represented by people whom they know and can be given an opportunity to see these people. I submit some members of this House probably spend more time in the process of transportation from one part of their constituency to another than some city members spend representing their people. I am not casting any reflection on any member of this House when I make that statement.

Again, as I did when I spoke in respect of the New Brunswick distribution, I want to make it very clear that no member of this House has a finer group of people, and no member derives more pleasure out of representing his constituents than I do. I do not object to any part of the constituency as it originally existed and in which I was elected. However, I object with the greatest vehemence at my command to what has been done to New Brunswick in a general way, because this redistribution has completely disregarded the social, geographic, ethnic, economic and political practicalities which should prevail in a program of constituency redistribution.

[Mr. McCain.]

I cite for you, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the filing by members of this House of the objection to the map when it was laid on the table was a non-political presentation, signed by members of the government party and the Conservative opposition, in an effort to obtain a better deal for our people. One great weakness of the present act is the fact that the commission is in no way obligated to listen to people. It has been given the opportunity to hold a hearing at a time and place of its convenience, to hear presentations written out in advance without necessarily any opportunity for rebuttal or discussion. This has limited the possibility of the presentation of the voters' ideas to a degree that most people in New Brunswick threw up their hands rather than attempt to make a presentation.

● (1520)

This is not a reflection on the members of the commission but, rather, on the regulations by which they are bound. Any act relating to the redistribution of seats should also give an opportunity to the people of the area to present their points of view in respect of redistribution. At the same time, it should obligate the commissioners to pay attention to them. The representations made in New Brunswick both by myself and the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin), as well as by the president of the Liberal Association, were almost ignored, although not totally. Therefore, the people find themselves in the position in which the commission decreed they should be initially.

This is not a local problem and I do not speak as a prejudiced individual from a particular constituency. The arguments which have been presented in the House have been publicized in one area as an intention by the members to protect themselves. I deny that. It is a misunderstanding of a political situation by somebody who does not have knowledge or expertise in the field of politics. It concerns me to see individuals make comments in respect of this subject when they have not at the same time, in the organization of their media operation, asked a member of the staff to live in that particular section of our society, investigate that facet of society from personal knowledge and then report on it. At no time has any individual, other than my own constituents, made a knowledgeable presentation to me, nor have I been asked why this redistribution should happen.

I do not know how many other members of the House have had the same experience with the media. I respect the media totally and recognize that they have a job to do. On occasion a mistake can be made by them, as well as by a politician. I submit that when you have an illness, you go to a doctor; when you have a political problem, you go to your member of parliament, legislator or city councillor. These are fields of expertise as completely separated from other fields as any, including the legal profession.

Members of the House have a knowledge of the problem, and if the act has a weakness its great weakness is lack of recognition of the political nature of a democratic country. It was intended, of course, to avoid gerrymandering, the lumping together of populations for political purposes by the government of the day. I think it may have avoided that to some degree, yet as I listen to reports from various areas of Canada I find that gerrymandering still exists. In its objective to eliminate gerrymandering, the act has