

Electoral Boundaries Commission

of Ontario. That seemed to have the attraction of creating problems of about equal proportions.

When we began to think that, unless these commissions for the western and eastern provinces were to be of inordinate size, there would be only one resident of each of these provinces on the commission, whereas in the case of Ontario and Quebec there would be three or four, and again in the case of one commission for the four western provinces there would be only one representative from Manitoba, one from Saskatchewan, and so on, it did not seem to us that this would prove very acceptable to the population.

With regard to the point made by the hon. member for Wellington South, I know he was speaking sincerely and it certainly sounds reasonable to suggest that the more commissions the greater the cost. However, I doubt whether in this particular circumstance this is true at all. The commission in Prince Edward Island, for example, is not going to have a very extensive task. There will always be four constituencies, or constituencies to elect four members, so that commission should not have to work for a whole year; it will work only as long as required to do the job. The same is true of Nova Scotia and the same is true of New Brunswick. It seems to me that if we had one commission for those four provinces it would more likely take longer than if we had a separate commission for each province.

Those of us who had to do with the matter of drafting were very much fortified in this view by the experience of Australia, which experience we examined. Although the population there is much smaller, and in some respects it is a more homogeneous country perhaps than Canada, Australia has six commissions, one for each state. I reached the same conclusion, but quite independently, as that reached by the representation commissioner after his return from Australia, when he advised me that he had also come to the conclusion that the most efficient and satisfactory way to carry out redistribution would be to have ten commissions. That is why the legislation was brought in in this form.

As I indicated before adoption of second reading, Mr. Chairman, we are not making this matter of confidence or anything of that sort, but I said that I felt that ten commissions would be much more satisfactory than one commission; and I think one commission would probably be more satisfactory than four, though it would take even longer.

In the circumstances, therefore, I do not feel I can support this amendment, although I can easily understand why the hon. gentleman has put it forward.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

[Translation]

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I shall say a few words on the amendment submitted by my colleague, the hon. member for Shefford (Mr. Rondeau).

The Minister of Transport raised some points against such an amendment, and all those who put forward any arguments must have cudgelled their brains for a long time to find such sophisms.

Indeed, there was not a valid argument against the amendment. It is obvious that a single commission for the four maritime provinces will take longer than four commissions would, that is, one for each of the four provinces. With four commissions, one for the west, one for Ontario, one for the maritime provinces and one for Quebec, it is to be expected, as there are 35 counties in the four maritime provinces, that the commission responsible for those provinces will probably complete its task before the one responsible for Ontario, with 85 ridings.

It might perhaps take a longer time to have the work of the four maritime provinces done by one commission, instead of four, but that one commission for the four maritime provinces will certainly not finish its job before the Ontario commission, as that province comprises 85 ridings, or before the Quebec commission, which will have to deal with 75 ridings.

With ten commissions, as advocated by the Minister of Transport, some of them in certain provinces, would be completing their task in a few weeks, or a few months, whereas, those responsible for other provinces, would finish their work much later.

In the meantime, commissions having completed their work would have nothing to do while remaining on the federal government payroll. On the other hand, if only four commissions were appointed, with four secretariats, four personnel services, etc., a considerable amount of money could be saved and it would not take a longer period of time to establish the boundaries of the constituencies. Even if the four maritime provinces had only one commission, it would complete its work ahead of the Quebec and Ontario commissions.

The work for the country as a whole would not be delayed either should there be only one commission for the western provinces where there are only 72 ridings, or less than in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

Mr. Chairman, I submit that the Minister of Transport who contemplated earlier the appointment of four commissions, was right at that time; it was an appropriate thought, a bright idea—he has had a good idea for once, he should consider it again and carry it out.