

Redistribution

They say that as long as they have a reasonable numerical equity per vote, as long as there is something in the neighbourhood of 53,000 people in a rural constituency, then where the people vote, does not matter. They say, "We will take a compass and draw a circle on the map, and wherever that circle happens to touch that is where the people will go and vote." This is the very negation of an honest attempt at a form of redistribution which will give the best possible representation to the people concerned.

I think we are all agreed that a redistribution was badly needed, that in the great cities which had grown so rapidly in the post-war period there was an inequity in that a very large number of people had only a single member, as compared to a smaller number of people having a single member in a rural constituency. I think all hon. gentlemen would agree that that was not right. But surely merely to equate numbers and say, "Now that we have equated the numbers everything is the best in all possible worlds," is just as grave as to have the inequities of numbers that we previously had.

I think the commission has shown great contempt of the people with this redistribution and its approach to the matter. When debate took place in the house on the redistribution bill, I was somewhat concerned because I have had some experiences with administrative tribunals. I know how very quickly they lose touch with the people, and how very quickly they are inclined to become a law unto themselves because they are responsible to no one but themselves. I very much feared that a tribunal of this kind might not consider what was best for the people themselves in the areas which it was carving into new ridings.

At the time of that debate, even though it may not have been specifically spelled out in the act, I hoped that the commissions would take the trouble to catch the spirit of the act. I hoped that the commissioners would read the debate that had taken place, and thus catch something of the spirit of the act. I hoped they would not just carve the new ridings, willy-nilly, without considering the social mores of the people in the areas involved, the geographical connotations or the new boundaries, the historical associations of the people involved and also, very importantly, the ready ability to organize for political purposes within the new boundaries that they were going to establish.

This is something that cannot be done in a vacuum. The purpose of a redistribution is to create boundaries for political elections, which involve political organization, and if a commission carves up these new ridings without having any concern as to whether or not they are areas that might readily and most facilely be organized for political purposes, then it is denying the very object of the thing it is doing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Greene: The area with which I am particularly concerned is that which was formerly in the west end of the constituency of Renfrew South. This is an area which goes roughly from Eganville to Whitney, an area which, if I am not mistaken, has been entirely within Renfrew South since 1941 and at that time it was only the Whitney portion which was added. The rest had been in Renfrew South for many years previously. The people living there, apart from voting in Renfrew South, have all their connections, all their organizations and their habits—their whole lives—centred in the county of Renfrew. When they go to a larger centre to do their shopping they do it in either Pembroke or Renfrew.

Their church organizations are determined on a county basis. All their clubs and social associations are determined on a county basis. Their provincial political organization, even after redistribution, is on a county basis. The riding was maintained almost intact in South Renfrew in the provincial redistribution. They are organized politically for municipal purposes on a county basis, and are associated with the county of Renfrew for all purposes.

Now, all of a sudden, we take these people and for no good reason put them into two other ridings—no good reason but that this is the simplest thing to do. The commission did not take the trouble to concern itself with the habits of these people and where it would be most convenient for them to vote. It merely considered creating a numerical equation. All these people are being put into two new ridings. The key town of the two new ridings, the town which will likely be the hub of a new political community, in one instance is the town of Lindsay, and in the other the town of Napanee. But there is virtually no communication of any kind between Napanee and Lindsay and this area which is being carved up stretching from Eganville to Whitney. There are virtually no roads to