

*Redistribution Commission*

dealing with the suggestion of the hon. member for York-Scarborough that we consider these ridings under section 3 of the elections act as being ridings to which special consideration should be given. But this is not the rural-urban problem. This is a different problem. I represent a riding that up until recent years was an average rural riding. It is now a very large suburban riding, about the tenth largest in Canada, as far as I can determine.

In this particular kind of situation there is a very serious injustice in terms of the work loads of different members, and in spite of the best efforts of members of the house this situation continues to exist. I know, for example, that my hon. friend from Edmonton West represents a larger riding than I do, and I am sure his riding is ably represented, in a qualitative sense, in the house; but I am sure he would be one of the first to say that he could serve his people and the area better, were there a more equitable population base. I think a 10 per cent figure should be adequate in a tolerance, and certainly the experience of New Zealand suggests a 10 per cent figure. The Australian figure, according to the report of Mr. Castonguay, was 20 per cent. Although the commissions were allowed a 20 per cent tolerance, they in fact kept within a 10 per cent margin. The problem is not only what the tolerance should be; it is to anticipate the situations that are going to develop.

For example, if we redistribute on the basis of the 1961 census this would not be very equitable because my own riding has increased in population by almost 15 per cent since that time. The hon. member for York-Scarborough pointed out that in eight months over 10,000 new voters were added to his riding. This is going to continue. If we are to take the 1961 population base and allow a 33½ per cent tolerance, this will in effect mean that the largest riding could be twice the size of the smallest. The situation in regard to population growth continues to present a problem in this regard. On the basis of my riding, the riding of York-Scarborough or the riding of Edmonton West, we would have disparities at the time of the next redistribution every bit as bad as, if not worse than, the ones this house now faces.

This is not the kind of solution that can be spelled out clearly in rules. The electoral commission, when it comes to grips with the problem, will have to use a great deal of horse sense. We can give them a population base; we can say what tolerance shall apply, whether it be 10 per cent or 20 per cent—I think it should be no more than that—and we can say, "Please note the increase in

[Mr. Francis.]

voters as between the 1962 and 1963 elections", or give them the enumerations of any subsequent provincial election that may have been held; but when we spell out all the rules there will still be a great area in which discretion can be exercised by an independent commission. Even with the very best intentions, this commission will have to decide such things as some ridings at the present time representing minority groups. I would hope that an independent electoral commission would not quickly or lightly break up such ridings, because we know what the consequences would be if they did.

We know that certain ridings represent language distinctions and any electoral commission which attempted to redistribute mathematically without taking language boundaries into effect would be doing something that many of us would not like. For this reason I think the category of persons named to these independent commissions, much as I respect the judiciary, is restricted because of the limitation of time. I do not know many members of the bench who are not overworked, and seriously overworked, and when they are diverted to other functions as well, the administration of justice is thereby impaired to some degree. The fact remains that there are many people in different categories of public life who can contribute, and it is not easy always to spell them out individually or even by category. One person comes to my mind; he is a professor of sociology and worked for a number of years in the dominion bureau of statistics and on demographic studies. I think such a person is eminently qualified to serve on an independent commission. I am not concerned about the fact that we may not find people. The people can be found and they will, I am sure, be of the right independent calibre. I found it difficult to understand the reasoning of the hon. member for Port Arthur, who argued at one point that Ontario was so big that one commission could not do the job properly, and he suggested that if you put all the prairies together they would not be able to do the job properly either. The logic behind this argument is beyond my comprehension. I think at least we have to recognize the principle that within a province people are more competent in this matter, will know the province and its problems and are therefore much more likely to deal expeditiously and fairly with the problems of redistribution within the province than if we had one over-all, independent commission.

I personally strongly support the principle of setting up independent commissions for each province. The province of Ontario recently attempted a redistribution; they set up the machinery but then found the time of the