

*Electoral Boundaries Commission*

that the provinces in themselves, that is as organizations of their own, have a right to a certain measure of representation at all times.

This point is an important one to me in view of the information that the Prime Minister brought out. He dealt with the projection as to what would be the effect on the house of an increase in the membership to 293, and he showed very effectively, as I had demonstrated to me a couple of years ago by the chief electoral officer, that this really would not do much good for Saskatchewan, which in the short run tends to be the province that is going to lose the most so far as the number of seats is concerned. But I wonder how much longer we can go on carving down provinces such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba while leaving the maritime provinces protected by the Senate floor, when in the name of equity and having regard to population figures it is quite apparent that Saskatchewan and Manitoba in relation to the maritime provinces are being cut down below their respective weights in the chamber.

This is an extremely touchy and delicate point, and in considering the question of adding more seats I wonder whether a more pragmatic approach has not been considered by the Prime Minister or by his adviser, who I assume was the chief electoral officer in this case. That approach would be to freeze at this stage, in 1962, the present representation in the House of Commons. Why should Saskatchewan and Manitoba suffer because of the fact that constitutionally they have not been protected in the same way the maritime provinces have? If you were to work from the basis of freezing the membership at a minimum as at the present time and then making adjustments upward in those parts of the country where the population is moving up, it would at least remove the factor of the Senate floor, and limit the disadvantage to those provinces that are going to suffer at the present time. Since the Prime Minister comes from Saskatchewan I would have thought that he would be interested in that kind of approach.

With regard to his comments about the chamber, the number of members in it and the need for more intimacy, if he really feels as strongly about this matter as he has indicated on several occasions I think he should plan to proceed with it in the next parliament. I have said in the past that I am no great respecter of the British House of Commons in terms of what it accomplishes. I suppose I have watched it in session as much as most Canadian members of parliament, and I think the reasons for the different calibre of the debates there stem from factors other than the make-up of the actual chamber or the lack of desks. I should like to make one

[Mr. Fisher.]

point here. I do not think the attendance of the members of the British House of Commons, compared with the attendance of members in the Canadian House of Commons, is quite as good when it is considered that they are so much handier to Westminster than we are to Ottawa. There are hardly any British members of parliament who have to come from a great distance away, as many of our members do, and who are in London for such long periods of time as many of our members are stuck in Ottawa, if one may put it that way. So far as this house is concerned, I am thinking particularly of the western and eastern members who in my view have always tended to carry the burden of attendance in this chamber so much of the time.

I should like to move on to another point in relation to redistribution. I do not know what is in store with regard to who will be on the commission, but as the Prime Minister is a lawyer I have anticipated that it may be heavily weighted with judges, and if more than one judge pops up on this commission I will be quite disappointed. The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate made the point that the members of the commission should be named in the bill. I agree with him, and I think one of the people named should be a demographer. I think all members know that a demographer is a special kind of geographer who is trained in population studies and who has rather expert knowledge, as most of them I have encountered have, of trends, shifts and changes in population. Canada happens to be fairly well supplied with such people, and I think it would not be very difficult to find one distinguished professionally to take part in the work of this commission.

An indication was given that the chief electoral officer would probably be a member of the commission. I have tried to look at this both from the point of view of the office and the present incumbent, and I cannot particularly quarrel with the idea. From my experience with the present chief electoral officer it always seems to me that he is the most articulate man in Canada. I can only think of one person who approaches him, and that is Professor Cohen of McGill University.

The difficulty that I and other people, I suppose, have always found with regard to the chief electoral officer is that most of the arguments that we may put before him tend to founder on the very knowledge and brilliance that he brings to his job. One point about the chief electoral officer which the Prime Minister did not touch on and which is germane to the position I want to advance is that in his expressed opinions about redistribution I have found in him a tendency to fairness and a knowledge that