

*Privileges and Elections*

remarks concerning the responsibility of not only members of the House and the commissioner, but the responsibility of the government about the constitution as it pertains to the borders of constituencies and the number of constituencies in a province. While it may not be within the purview of the Standing Committee to look into the number of ridings in any given province, it seems to me that it is within the purview of the House to remind the government, in the whole business of constitutional reform, of how many Members of Parliament shall represent any province.

It seems to me we have an increasing tendency toward having a smaller number of members representing a larger number of people in a larger geographical area, while in other parts of Canada an equivalent number of members represent a smaller population in smaller geographical areas.

I was a member of the group which presented a brief to the Representation Commission in my province a few years ago. The three gentlemen who constituted that committee were very knowledgeable about the law and about the doings of legislatures and of Parliament, but they did not know very much about politics or about politicking. I do not mean that in any critical sense, but I say it because certainly two of the three had never been involved in politics and had never done any campaigning.

● (9:30 p.m.)

I hope that henceforth the Representation Commissioner will consider, when he is drafting or redrafting the boundaries of constituencies, what politicians of all political parties are faced with. The hon. Member who spoke just before me mentioned the geographical hazards. These have not only had to do with creeks, lakes, coulees, community pastures, sandhills and places which you have to go around, but in my constituency there is a lake which is one to three miles wide and 65 miles long. To get from one side of my riding to another I have to go around the lake. I am not complaining. It is a good constituency. It is one the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) used to hold, and I am determined that neither he nor anyone like him will get it back. But I know now the kind of problems he had in getting around the constituency.

It seems to me it is not enough just to consider the number of people in a constituency. It seems to me that the Representation Commissioner, within the legal limits to which he is confined, must consider how the

candidates of political parties are able to get around a constituency during the course of the electoral process and, once that process is terminated, how the elected member will be able to get around the constituency. Until such time as Parliament and the people of the country agree that it is more important that Members of Parliament get around their constituencies than how much they are paid, the Representation Commissioner will have some handicaps. But if the Representation Commissioner, with whatever commission he has in a province, considers the geographical limitations and the hazards that there are, there will be much more equity in terms of political parties presenting themselves to a maximum number of the electorate and in assuring that whoever is elected is able to do a much better job of getting around a constituency.

There is a further item which, though it may not be strictly in order in terms of the exact words of this motion, still has to do with the representation of Members of Parliament. It has to do with the ability of a Representation Commissioner to consider all aspects of the work of those who must represent the voters of the various constituencies. This concerns how much Members of Parliament are paid. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, you will be wondering how the devil I can connect that matter with the Representation Commissioner, but the cost of travelling and being in one's constituency has more to do with the whole problem than the actual amount of the indemnity. This, again, takes into account the geographical layout of any given constituency.

I feel that in 1965 and in 1966 there was insufficient opportunity for individual citizens and organizations of any kind, be they political or non-political, to make representations and express their views before the commissions in the provinces. I hope that the Committee on Privileges and Elections after considering this motion will recommend to the House that ample time and ample financing be given to the Representation Commissioner. He in turn can authorize the respective commissions in each province to go much more extensively into the matter of holding hearings and receiving the views, first of the political parties—because they are the ones who have to go where the action is and have to do the job—and, equally important, the views of any and all kinds of organizations and individuals who are interested in and concerned with constituencies.