

Electoral Boundaries Commission

If, for instance, in provinces like Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick, there are important communities of French speaking Canadians, the fact should be definitely considered in a redistribution, so as to avoid discrimination and to enable those homogeneous groups, with the same culture, language and traditions, to be represented in Ottawa by a member meeting those requirements, if they so desire.

This also applies to the English minorities in the province of Quebec. It would be unfair to the French minorities in other provinces of this country, as well as to the English minority in the province of Quebec, to cut up ridings so as to deprive those minorities of their right to adequate representation.

The English minority in the province of Quebec should not be absorbed by the French majority, no more than the French minorities in the English provinces of this country should be absorbed by the English majority.

To my mind, there should be a special clause stipulating that the rights of the French speaking minorities in the other provinces, as well as those of the English minority in the province of Quebec, be considered.

As I said a moment ago, the British North America Act contains a section which, as regards redistribution in the province of Quebec, provides for counties whose limits or frontiers cannot be changed. That should also apply to constituencies in certain parts of the country where there are French Canadian localities.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to delay the passing of this bill and I will only ask the minister to bear that point in mind, a point which I consider of the utmost importance, at the time of the redistribution of ridings. I would be pleased if the minister could say a few words on the subject.

[Text]

Mr. Eric A. Winkler (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say just a very brief word before we complete the discussion at this stage. I certainly will not take up many minutes of the time of the house. I think the minister in this instance will perhaps be eligible for some sort of award when we complete the consideration of the bill, because it will be the first bill the government has not pulled out of on its own, amended, changed—

Mr. Nowlan: Or ruined.

Mr. Winkler: That is correct, or ruined, before bringing it back into the house. The point I should like to make is in conjunction with what I said earlier this week in the house with

regard to redistribution. I think the minister and the government should consider very, very seriously the point in regard to the tolerance figure now contained in the bill. I believe that in a country such as Canada we cannot have representation by population right at the basis of our thinking. This cannot be an exact basis for consideration. I believe that the confusion—and I say this very honestly—which the government has created and which exists in the country today in many other fields will only be compounded if they endeavour in the first instance to start off from a very, very narrow base such as the 20 per cent they have indicated or the 10 per cent that someone else has indicated. I think it should not be any lower than 33½ per cent; then as the years go by and this question comes back for consideration this figure can be reduced and the people of Canada will understand the function of the bill as it follows each census.

We know that in Great Britain there is no tolerance figure; this situation is left entirely in the hands of the adjudicators in regard to setting the areas of population and territory as well. Therefore I suggest very, very strongly to the minister that he should consider this point before we reach the committee stage; that he should be prepared to amend this figure to 33½ per cent. I say this on behalf of his own well-being as the minister presenting the bill, and also as a politician. I think he may have some other point in mind here in the way the constituencies will be established. We do not believe for one moment that he is going to eliminate a constituency, but he may contort it sufficiently that somebody will be placed in a position of disadvantage; and you can be very sure, Mr. Speaker, that it will not be the minister or any of his supporters.

We want him to know that we are cognizant of these things and we plead with him at this stage—I personally plead with him—to adopt a tolerance figure of 33½ per cent to begin the function the bill is supposed to carry through, or eliminate it and leave the matter entirely in the hands of the commissions concerned.

Mr. K. H. More (Regina City): Mr. Speaker, I only want to speak briefly, and put a point of view to the minister before we pass this bill. I have listened to this debate and followed it up by re-reading the presentations that have been made to this stage. I found some very interesting things in those presentations. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), who now supports a limited tolerance, in 1952 when his party had a large representation from the rural areas of the country did not have this view. It is