

*Electoral Boundaries*

and similarly, the member for Lotbinière will never be made the member for Drummond or Bellechasse. Each one of us is different. Besides being different by our own personality and by our own political party, we are different by our mentality, by the village we represent, by the piece of country that we represent.

The problems which we have to tackle daily are not always the same. They differ from one part of the country to another. Some members solely represent a rural area and their problem is wheat or milk in the rural constituencies or textile and furniture in other urban constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, it is important, since Parliament is the best representative institution, that Parliament should not only have its say about representation, but the last word, not that I do not have confidence in the commissioners, on the contrary but the commissioners of the Redistribution Commission should be there with the same capacity as many other commissions which we have entirely set up, as consultants to prepare the work, do the research and prepare the necessary statistics.

Mr. Speaker, because of the very size of our country, we need to have of course a standing committee responsible for studying and finding methods and making recommendations to Cabinet and Parliament in order to achieve the highest degree of representation possible; and eventually the legislators should have this report before them and take the decisions which have to be taken.

I would therefore seize this occasion, Mr. Speaker, to ask the President of the Privy Council to take this recommendation very seriously—and I believe many members share in my opinion on this point—and to introduce as soon as possible a piece of legislation that will eliminate this anachronism which is responsible for us having this debate tonight. We know very well the various areas of our country. For example, it is sheer nonsense that the town of Dosquet should be part of Frontenac. It is normal, natural that it should be part of Lotbinière, and that would have almost no effect on the quotient of representation.

It would be only normal that the legislators have the final say and make the final decision, and this under the authority of a legislation which would govern this area of representation. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, we refuse to face the problem. We just have to remember the last proposal that was made, which at that time had raised a general outcry among all hon. members and in every province of Canada because of the way the quotas had been established. Mr. Speaker, we know how much wheeling and dealing it took then to get Parliament to reject that proposal. Today, we have a proposal that, in the whole, as many members have pointed out, is generally acceptable except in a few areas such as Abitibi, eastern Quebec, and for instance the loss of the constituencies of Rivière-du-Loup or Abitibi to which hon. members have addressed themselves. Mr. Speaker, it is all the more important that Parliament have its say as regards representation. I would quote one more example to show the importance of the second point I made and point out how important it is for Parliament, through a particular piece of legislation, to have its say in this matter, since it is the representative body of this country. The Abitibi region is a typical example, it covers a huge area with a population as important as that of Lotbinière, Montreal, Quebec city, Trois-Rivières or

Drummond. These people are entitled to the same representation. These people have the same rights as any other citizen. They are full-fledged taxpayers. As far as I know, the people from Abitibi must pay the same taxes as in other parts of the country. Why then should they be deprived of such an effective representation in Parliament, because they are living in a huge area that is not as densely populated as downtown Montreal?

Mr. Speaker, when such criteria are used, the result is sheer nonsense. The commissioners cannot be blamed for this kind of nonsense. They are working with the tools we gave them. We should be the ones to blame. Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have somehow buried our heads in the sand. As they say in English, at a given point in time: "Give me the tools and I will do the job." That is more or less what is happening now. And I say, Mr. Speaker, that we do not have the right, as members of Parliament, to allow a reduction in the representation of some regions on the grounds that they are vast territories.

The people of Abitibi are not responsible for that, neither are the people of Rivière-du-Loup. When we are referring to a change concerning Saint-Octave de Dosquet, that is a very small change indeed. Actually, it means having a particular parish in one riding rather than in another. That is a kind of problem the Commission can easily solve, without disturbing anybody. But when it comes to the representation of a whole group of people or a given territory, that is quite another matter, Mr. Speaker, and I think that at that level the Canadian Parliament must protect—I repeat protect—the rights of Canadians to a fair and equal degree of representation in Parliament from sea to sea. Whatever the language, the location in the country or the education. Therefore, the President of the Privy Council who is responsible for this should put as soon as possible a legislation before this Parliament which would give the Canadian Parliament the authority required both to establish a standing commission on representativeness in Canada and on electoral boundaries. This commission would not simply draw lines but come up with figures, in particular on the participation of the Canadian people inside these fictitious lines, so that each citizen anywhere inside these fictitious lines has the same fair representation in Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, we discuss the salaries of members of Parliament. There are some exceptions so that some members from remote areas may have higher expense accounts to visit their ridings. It is a well known fact here. Why? To give a member greater facility and some equity compared to his other colleagues. If we do so and if we allow this type of exception because of the remoteness factor for some members, why not do so more especially for the citizens of these ridings? It costs nothing to Parliament. It only costs the principle of a citizen living in Malartic, in Rivière-du-Loup, in Drummondville, in Victoriaville, in Montmagny, who has the same representativeness in Parliament. It would then be up to him to choose a political option likely to give him that representativeness, but this Parliament will have at least given him the right to have his own member of Parliament in his riding, who typically represents his region. Then, Mr. Speaker, the member is more accessible and the citizen may then obtain some services and some information from him.