

living in rural districts have moved into the cities. The farming population has been decreasing because fewer people are required on the farms. The result of all this is that the city constituencies have become overcrowded, and the population of the rural constituencies has become smaller and smaller.

The redistribution carried out by the Government of the Right Honourable Mr. St. Laurent, and previous redistributions, have never been satisfactory to both major parties because they were handled by politicians. As Senator Power said, the aim is to get this matter as far away from politics as possible.

It is generally conceded, I think, that Mr. Diefenbaker, when taking up the problem again in 1962, proposed a principle in this field which had genuine historical importance. That principle was that questions of redistribution should be taken out of political hands and placed in those of impartial people. This was his idea, and the idea contained in the legislation that he proposed. That principle still holds today, as is reflected in this bill.

In the past, the party in power, with its majority on the redistribution committee, could, and often did, juggle the constituency boundaries to suit its particular desires. This was not true of any one particular party; it was true, as we all know, of the different political parties at different times. Politicians are human, and the parties are made up of human beings.

This present bill was introduced in the House of Commons on March 2 of this year. Second reading was moved on March 9, and the bill was read the second time and sent to the committee on April 15. The report of the committee was made on Monday, November 16, and the Commons passed the bill.

When it was originally introduced the bill contained two important departures from the past which proved to be stumbling blocks preventing earlier passage in the House of Commons. First, the bill proposed that a latitude or tolerance of 20 per cent be allowed on each side of the average population of a constituency. The basic constituency population is 65,000, and a population of 70,000 is envisioned except for the Province of Prince Edward Island which has four ridings, each with an average population of approximately 26,000.

The Opposition party's stand on this point was a demand for a tolerance of one-third, or 33½ per cent. Honourable senators will recall that a compromise was agreed to by all parties, and the bill now provides for a tolerance of 25 per cent. I think this is very sound. Despite the fact that there are these very large city constituencies, the rural constituency is entitled to great consideration.

For instance, in my province, in the constituency of Charlotte, the people are interested in fishing, farming, forestry and such activities, relating to many departments of Government. These are matters in which the man living in the city has no particular interest. There is the matter of rural mails to be dealt with. The representatives of rural constituencies have to travel many miles to see their constituents, whereas a few blocks may contain all the members of a constituency in a city.

The bill also proposed that the work should be done by 10 independent commissions, with one for each province. There was reluctant but general agreement on this proposal, as opposed to the alternative suggestion of one committee for the whole country. A basic argument in favour of the Government's proposal was that 10 separate commissions would save time in doing the job. No doubt this is true and it will be particularly necessary at this time, where so much time has been lost in making the redistribution.

The original bill also provided that the Representation Commissioner should sit on each four-man commission. That would be the Chief Electoral Officer, as we know him at the present time. It proposed also that one of the other members of each committee should be a senior judge nominated by the provincial chief justice and that he would act as chairman. It also provided that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition each would appoint one man to each provincial commission. This was in the original bill but, as the sponsor of the present bill has pointed out, this point was changed in the bill we have before us now.

In the other place, the New Democratic Party moved an amendment, subsequently accepted by the Government, that would eliminate the proposed activity by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, by putting the power of appointment in the hands of the provincial chief justice. The amendment did not come to a vote, however, until November 12, and it was defeated. In the interim, the Government and the official Opposition came to an agreement whereby the honourable Speaker of the house was given the responsibility of appointment as originally intended for the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The final vote for appointment by the Speaker was carried 92 to 11. This seemed the best possible solution. It may not be an ideal one, but there is more to be said in favour of it than against it. Thus each group in each province would have the responsibility of redrawing their respective provincial constituencies.

Honourable senators, may I say here that this was the idea which the honourable Leader of the then Government had in 1962.