

Electoral Boundaries Commissions

point out that the discussions which are taking place are in the interests of the north Pacific fisheries.

REDISTRIBUTION

**PROVISION FOR BOUNDARIES COMMISSIONS
AND READJUSTMENT OF
REPRESENTATION**

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister) moved the third reading of Bill No. C-72, to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions to report upon the readjustment of the representation of the provinces in the House of Commons and to provide for the readjustment of such representation in accordance therewith.

Mr. W. H. A. Thomas (Middlesex West): I should like to make a few brief comments on the third reading of this bill. During the course of the debate it has been suggested by various speakers that when the provincial commissions begin their work they are likely to search the *Hansard* record to help clear up any matters of interpretation that they might find it necessary to deal with, and that the *Hansard* record would assist them in this regard by making clear to them what were the wishes and intentions of the members of parliament.

I am going to confine my remarks to the interpretation that might be applied to section 13, subsection (c) which reads as follows:

(c) the commission may depart from the strict application of rules (a) and (b) in any case where

- (i) special geographic considerations, including in particular the sparsity, density or relative rate of growth of population of various regions of the province, the accessibility of such regions or the size or shape thereof, appear to the commission to render such a departure necessary or desirable, or
- (ii) any special community or diversity of interests of the inhabitants of various regions of the province appears to the commission to render such a departure necessary or desirable.—

Then the section goes on to state that a tolerance of 25 per cent may be applied in the case of constituencies in which it is found necessary to vary the strict rule. I should like to say that in the province of Ontario the constituencies have traditionally been based upon county boundaries. This does not apply in some other parts of Canada, but in the province of Ontario it is of great importance. I should like to make a plea today that when the commission for Ontario comes to the interpretation of the provisions of this bill they respect this traditional practice of basing the constituencies on county boundaries.

[Mr. Robichaud.]

There are two concepts that such a commission might use in approaching the problem. The first is to apply a rigid, mathematical formula based on the fact that urban constituencies should have the maximum population, rural constituencies should have the minimum population, and constituencies which are part urban and part rural should come between these two limits. Now, if such a concept were applied rigidly it would probably have the effect of completely wiping out or completely distorting the present constituency boundaries in the province of Ontario.

I believe this is unnecessary if the commission, rather than adopting such a rigid, mathematical approach, would adopt a practical, non-disruptive approach and deal with the constituency boundaries in Ontario with as little distortion as possible. I believe this procedure would be found much more satisfactory for the people in the Ontario constituencies.

I should like to indicate briefly what may happen in western Ontario in this regard. Down in the southeast corner of Ontario is Essex county, containing the city of Windsor. There are three constituencies in Essex county, including the city of Windsor, namely Essex East, Essex West and Essex South. If the population of these three constituencies is divided by three, that is the population of Essex county including the population of the city of Windsor, we come up with a quotient of 85,258. Now, assuming that the average population of a constituency in Ontario will be about 70,000—and preliminary calculations indicate that this will be the case—then in these Ontario constituencies we can go from a low of about 53,000 to a high of 87,000 or 88,000. The figure for the three constituencies in Essex county, including the city of Windsor, would work out at 85,258, which is quite within those limits. I submit, therefore, that Essex county and the city of Windsor, with some slight adjustment in the boundaries to even up the three constituencies in that area, could be left alone.

Then we go a little farther north to the county of Middlesex, including the city of London. If we divide the population of the county of Middlesex including the city of London by three and make a similar adjustment by putting certain municipalities from one constituency into another but still maintaining the traditional county boundaries, we get an average of 73,000 per constituency. I suggest that this is just about right. Elgin county, which is down in that corner, is just