

Electoral Boundaries

Mines to Gaspé, an area which has 635,000 inhabitants, or an average of 63,500 inhabitants per riding.

According to the commission report, eastern Quebec loses another riding. Thus the rural area loses a representative in the House of Commons and the average population per riding will rise to 70,548, which will be a very heavy load for the member of Parliament who will have to cover great distances as compared to a representative for a city where the population is much more dense. Eastern Quebec is developing at a very slow rate. The government measures will promote the creation of industries in the Montreal area and the young people must necessarily leave their rural environment to go and make a living in the big urban centres.

Not only are we penalized on the economic level, but also as far as the administration is concerned. Not a single minister in the present Trudeau cabinet represents the eastern area of Quebec. Furthermore, according to the commission report, we will lose a riding. So, we will be deprived of another representative who would have fought for the development of that area.

Mr. Ouellet: There is the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard).

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): I am still referring to the eastern region. The Lake St. John area is another region, to my mind. I have taken note of the remark made by the hon. member for Papineau—

An hon. Member: Because the hon. member for Papineau takes care of the Témiscamingue area.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Oh, come on! I am not criticizing.

I am dealing with facts, and I hope that some time or other, the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) will have an opportunity to appoint a member in what I call the eastern part of the Province of Quebec.

We may hear suggestions that the government wants to establish a just society, a new society, but that is at the expense of rural areas. I realize this is not within the commission's terms of reference. I would not like the commissioners to misunderstand my remarks.

The commission report proposes for Bellechasse a population of 80,504 as against 64,675 now, an increase of 15,829. Geographically speaking, Bellechasse covers as large an area as Belgium, and the report adds to it 95 percent of l'Islet, the neighbouring riding.

Mr. Speaker, the way things are going, I would not be surprised if I were given the whole of Quebec. The next thing would be to appoint me its president.

Since under the report five parishes are removed from the southwestern part of Bellechasse to be include in Lévis, the member will have to go through Lévis municipalities to reach the southern part of Bellechasse, which is preposterous and unacceptable.

Since in rural ridings, a member of Parliament has to visit every parish regularly, this adds to his responsibilities. It is therefore unreasonable to provide for a riding including 56 parishes as proposed for Bellechasse.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Another thing must be considered too. If democracy is to survive, it is important that electors meet their representative as often as possible. This will be almost impossible if such a large number of parishes is allowed. For the time element must be taken into account. There are but seven days in a week, even for the rural member of Parliament.

I would therefore ask the Commission to reconsider its report and amend it in order to maintain the same number of ridings in the eastern area which I have referred to.

At the time of the 1968 readjustment, there were 640,403 people living in this area which was divided into 10 ridings, with an average of 64,740 people per riding. In 1976, there are 635,000 people and the Commission has reduced to nine the number of ridings in the aforementioned area. As I said before, these will have an average of 70,548 people for each riding. The ridings I am referring to are the previous ridings of Mégantic-Frontenac, Beauce, Dorchester, Lévis, Bellechasse, Montmagny-l'Islet, Kamouraska, Témiscouata, Rimouski, Matapédia-Matane, Gaspé and Bonaventure. In those days, all those ridings were included in that area, but there were 12 ridings with an average of 53,358 people per riding. After the 1965-68 readjustment, that same area was divided into 10 ridings with an average population of 64,029. The 1976 report shows the following results for that same area: a population of 635,000, and nine ridings with an average of 70,548 per riding.

Mr. Speaker, at this point, if you will allow me, I should like to request consent of the House to table this document which I would very much like to see appended to the *Hansard* for this day.

Mr. Béchard: What is it?

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): The figures I have just quoted on the area and its population.

● (2030)

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wish I could agree with the hon. member's request to table this document in the House. But I regret that it is not possible, under the Standing Orders, to table and to append this document, unless, Mr. Speaker, I am mistaken.

[*English*]

In other words, as I understand it it is not the prerogative of individual members to table documents for any purpose.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Béchard: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry I do not agree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Blais), but I believe that the figures just given by the hon. member for Bellechasse speak for themselves, and I see nothing in the Standing Orders which would prevent the tabling of a document, when someone refers to it. On the contrary, he can be asked and forced to table it. I think this document would be very helpful to the commissioners and would enlighten their discussions on electoral boundaries in the future.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Citation 159(4) in *Beauchesne's* fourth edition reads in part: