

*Redistribution Commission*

find that section 52 of the British North America Act permits the number of members in this house to be increased by parliament, provided the proportionate representation of the provinces is not disturbed. Therefore we need no formal act or amendment to the British North America Act to increase the number of seats; it could very easily be done right in the statute we are considering, or in the other one concerning the electoral boundaries commission. I think we ought to know which of these alternatives is in the mind of the government before we pass the resolution. I say that the Secretary of State has touched very little on these four matters.

I think we should be told the population average that is to be accepted, and the percentage of deviation. Figures of 20 per cent, one third, 25 per cent, and so forth, have been mentioned. These are not just figures taken out of the air. Each percentage of deviation allowed under the act will affect a great many members, and 5 per cent can make the difference as to whether a riding is to be altered or left. I think geographical limits should also be discussed; how large or how small a riding should be in connection with its geographical location. Also, I think we should know what level of tolerance will be permitted between urban and rural ridings. We do know that in general members in rural ridings represent fewer constituents. The hon. member for York-Scarborough is a classic example of what happens in an urban riding at the moment.

We should know what is in the mind of the government in connection with these questions. Other matters are also important. There is the matter of main roads and connecting roads. It has been suggested that the surveyor general and the dominion bureau of statistics could provide a great deal of information on this matter, and this is perfectly acceptable. But we cannot just draw lines on a map and redivide these constituencies. It is not too satisfactory at the moment in many ridings. The centre of gravity of the riding may be a good many miles from the northernmost or southernmost limits of the riding, and yet in another riding the centre of gravity may be much closer. I think communications are important. Radio and television are becoming more important than they used to be. I personally have no television station directly in my riding; I have to use one near the north end of the riding and one at the south end. I am not asking for any change in this regard because I think the riding which I represent is sufficiently large and well populated to be left alone.

This brings me to another point. I would like the Secretary of State to tell us, if he will, whether, if a riding comes within the

rules or the criteria of population and deviation, it will be left alone. In other words, if it is between minimum and maximum within the rules set down, will that riding be left alone in name and geographic boundaries? Or even if it comes within the limitations that are set down, will there be fiddling around with the outside boundaries of the riding? I think we should know this, because while some of the most serious problems concern the elimination of ridings by absorption into adjacent ridings, there is also quite a serious problem in regard to adding to or subtracting from ridings which at the present time are perfectly satisfactory, having regard to all the criteria that could be set down.

In connection with the commissioners, I agree to some extent with the suggestion of the hon. member for Edmonton West that perhaps we cannot name the individuals who will be commissioners under the legislation, but I think we should provide in the bill that they be named by resolution of the house. If we do not choose to name people in the bill that we pass, if we merely set out the type of persons they should be, and if the Secretary of State and the government want to keep this matter, in fact as well as in theory, a non-partisan and impartial commission or commissions, the persons appointed should be named in the house, either in the bill or by a supplementary resolution. I think only by doing this can we say there will be an impartial naming of these people, and it will not merely be a case of the government appointing people who they are quite satisfied will follow the general lines the government desires to be followed. I believe these people should be named.

Arising out of this, Mr. Chairman, it must follow that I do not agree with there being ten separate commissions. I agree that we should have a strong central body, a strong central commission, made up of a commissioner and people such as the surveyor general, an official from the dominion bureau of statistics and judicial persons. These people would make up a satisfactory central body and I think that in order to keep equal representation across the nation this primary function should be carried out by simply one body. If in each province it is desired to have people working on this problem and making representations to the central body, I would have no objection; I think that is necessary. But I think there should be a central body which would make the final decision in connection with the whole question of distribution. The provincial people should not be asked to form an independent commission.