

Government Orders

• (1525)

I dare say that with Ontario gaining four seats, I am not prepared to compromise that nor would I like to see my friends from British Columbia suffer any loss of seats. I would like to add a little comparison. Take a look at the House today. These seats have been moved so close together that if even I put on a little weight, which has not happened for a long time, it would be difficult to get between the seats.

An hon. member: I am not a health nut.

Mr. Richardson I am sorry. I did not mean to reflect on any other member in the House.

However, if some day in the future we approach the population of our neighbours to the south, we will need 3,000 seats in the House of Commons. We are going to have to look at the size of ridings in the country so we can keep a reasonable number in Parliament.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, I have been in politics for about 20 years, and I have never seen such a mess. I must admit this is the first time I been particularly aware of the social and economic impact of adjusting the federal electoral map.

When I was quite young, my mother used to get bored while my father, who was a travelling salesman, was away, and she would do jigsaw puzzles. After looking at the proposed electoral map, my impression was that the people who drew this map must have been very bored indeed to perpetrate this proposal, pardon the expression.

I found it hard to understand the logic involved in this electoral boundaries readjustment proposal, and I did some quick research on ridings in East Montreal that were affected by this proposal. One conclusion is that the proposal ignores socio-demographic and socio-economic factors to all intents and purposes. The proposal shows a complete disregard for any concept of community. In other words, it was botched.

A riding should first and foremost represent a community. We cannot get around this social fact. It is foolish to alter the boundaries of a riding and blindly carve up natural communities to satisfy the demands of fuzzy mathematical logic and administrative efficiency.

A member of Parliament is elected to serve the interests of his constituents, not those technocrats who very often have no concept of the practical needs of community groups. A member of Parliament must defend the interests of individuals, community groups and businesses and promote the development of economic activity in his riding.

The proposed administrative boundaries transform a number of communities into a meaningless expanse of statistical data and arbitrary geographic divisions. Let me explain. All this has

no connection with the activities of these communities. I am talking about neighbourhoods, urban districts, people living in a naturally homogeneous environment, which may be cultural, ethnic, religious or economic, a living community, organized in human terms and not for administrative purposes alone.

As I said before, I made some enquiries among my colleagues in East Montreal to assess the impact of the proposed readjustment. Here are a few examples. I may recall that Montreal is divided into administrative units referred to as *arrondissements* or districts.

In the riding of Mercier, the urban district of Mercier-Ouest is cut in two. This means breaking up a natural demographic unit for the sake of mathematical considerations. From now on, three federal members will be working to promote the interests of the same social groups and the same economic organizations, while at the provincial level, a single member is able to take care of the same needs in the provincial riding of Bourget.

In the federal riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve we see the same lack of logic. Why cut the provincial riding of Bourget in two? This arbitrary division is as distasteful to the people of Mercier as it is to the people of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. Once again, this means fracturing a natural urban district.

• (1530)

Furthermore, the proposal adds onto the northern part of the riding a population which has no natural affinity, other than geographical, to the riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. It would be more appropriately added to the riding of Saint-Léonard, in terms of socio-demographic affinity.

In Rosemont, the riding will get part of the riding of Saint-Michel which, again, has no social affinity to the population in Rosemont, while, the riding would welcome the annexation of part of Outremont, so that its boundaries would coincide with those of the LCSCs—local community service centres—and urban districts.

The case of Papineau—Saint-Michel is rather peculiar. The riding of the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been struck off the map. What is the reasoning behind this decision? Part of the population of this homogeneous riding, which includes the former town of Saint-Michel, its parishes, recreation services, health care institutions and community groups, has been moved to the riding of Saint-Léonard, a riding which practically coincides with the town of Saint-Léonard. We now have a situation where the population of the former town of Saint-Michel will be a minority, in the new riding.

The other half of Papineau—Saint-Michel has been moved to the riding of Saint-Denis, which will extend to Acadie Boulevard. People in Montreal realize how ridiculous this is. The community resources of two districts in Montreal's centre north will be disorganized as a result.