

Electoral Boundaries Commission

the loss of four seats would be a tremendous blow to the province unless special consideration were given.

Just to put the matter into perspective, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the possible gain to other parts of Canada, such as an urban centre like Toronto. It has been suggested that this great urban metropolis might gain four, five or possibly six seats, bringing its total representation up to, say, 26 members. Let us compare the representation of this one urban centre to that of a whole province, such as Saskatchewan, which might be confined to only 13 ridings. I think that this puts the problem into perspective on a geographic basis. True enough, Toronto has a large population; but looking at that population and comparing it to the population of Saskatchewan, and looking at the economic problems of that condensed area of Toronto, I feel in all justification that it could be represented by less rather than more members. I also feel Saskatchewan should at least maintain as many as it now has.

Another factor which should be considered in the present scene as we see it today is that the responsibilities of this great nation of ours in world affairs mean that, figuratively speaking, the world is becoming smaller and our contribution more complex. With our entrance into external affairs and world problems this means that this House of Commons has to sit sometimes six, seven or even eight months in the year in order to carry on the nation's business. This means that members from large rural areas, such as those in Saskatchewan with large geographic boundaries, have no time to get back home and meet personally representatives from the municipalities, which representatives are like ourselves elected, discuss with them the problems in their various municipalities, and meet one's constituents personally.

If the boundaries are enlarged this will mean that greater hardship will fall on the members representing these larger constituencies and it will have an adverse effect on the welfare of their constituents. True enough, people will argue that with modern means of transportation we can get around more quickly. That is true, but we must compare this state of affairs with members who represent ridings such as mine. Or let us take the constituency of Mackenzie up in the northeast corner of Saskatchewan or the Meadow Lake area in the northwest. We require transportation by air in order to get around our constituencies.

Mr. Nowlan: I have to use a motor boat.

Mr. Southam: Yes, some hon. members have to use a motor boat. Much time is spent in

[Mr. Southam.]

travelling. Therefore, this suggestion about increasing the boundary areas should get, as I say, very special attention.

With these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will close; but I again make the plea to the Minister of Transport that the commissions which are to be set up should take special notice of the problems I have mentioned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Is the house ready for the question?

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say about two words—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Order. I must advise the house that if the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) speaks now, he will close the debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. L. J. Pigeon (Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, I only have a few remarks to make on the matter now before us.

Surely, great prudence will be required in the consideration of this bill, so that there will be no discrimination on the part of the government on that matter of redistribution. I have great confidence in the civil servants, including Mr. Castonguay who is very able, very dedicated, and who is doing an excellent job. Several criteria will have to be taken into consideration concerning redistribution. First of all, the area; second, the low density of population; third, the geography; fourth, the provincial divisions.

May I point out that as far as certain ridings of the province of Quebec are concerned, there is a quite rigid section in the British North America Act providing that the delimitations of certain ridings must remain unchanged at the provincial level, so far as the province of Quebec is concerned, such as the ridings of Pontiac, Hull, Argenteuil, Huntingdon, Missisquoi, Brome, Shefford, Stanstead, Compton, Wolfe, Richmond, Megantic and Sherbrooke. Those are permanent ridings which cannot be changed. Their delimitations cannot be changed by the province of Quebec for redistribution purposes, without an amendment to the British North America Act. At that time, those provisions were made to give justice to English speaking minorities in the province of Quebec which had settled in certain particular ridings.

I want to mention this fact in the house, even if it does not come under federal administration. In any case, with regard to redistribution, the government has to consider the English speaking minority in the province of Quebec, but also the French minorities in the various provinces of this country.