

Redistribution

3. Particular objection is taken to the commission proposal to have no fully urban seats in Saskatchewan. The capital city of Regina, and the city of Saskatoon should be city ridings. This can be accomplished by allowing the full quotient of 88,960 population, placing the remainder of these cities in the surrounding rural constituencies.

And other objections that the undersigned members may deem necessary to carry out the spirit of fair redistribution will be presented verbally. A map will be submitted to the Electoral Boundaries Commission with constituency boundaries drawn to meet the objections noted above.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out too soon, my remarks today will be directed toward outlining the redistribution situation as it concerns the province of Saskatchewan rather than just the constituency of Qu'Appelle which I represent.

When we passed the legislation which turned the power of redistribution of electoral boundaries over to independent commissions, we did so after lengthy and historical difficulty in the House of Commons in trying to decide the boundaries of constituencies, because on too many occasions the paramount consideration was political partisanship on the part of various people concerned with their various positions.

At that time I think all parties agreed that the time had arrived in Canadian development to turn much of the responsibility for the establishment of electoral boundaries over to independent commissions. That did not, however, free the members of the House of Commons, from the final responsibility of making a decision about the worthiness of the work of those independent commissions.

It is for that very reason we included safeguards, one of which we are now taking advantage of in having the reports of the commission submitted to this house for consideration and reference back to the commissions, with the hope that they too will recognize that this whole matter involves co-operation between members of parliament and the independent commissions.

In the objection, signed by 16 of the 17 members of parliament from Saskatchewan, there are four general criticisms of the commission in respect of Saskatchewan. One of these criticisms, and I think this is the most cogent, relates to the fact that in the agricultural province of Saskatchewan we have only two large cities, yet the commissioners have cut these two cities in half and included the halves with rural ridings. As a result of this redistribution the number of ridings in the province has been reduced from 17 to 13.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

There are no city ridings as such. We have some purely rural ridings, and some partially rural and partially urban. This gives a member no opportunity whatsoever to devote himself entirely to urban problems. It gives those who live in the cities the feeling that their particular, narrow interests are not being fully represented in the national parliament. This was one of the main criticisms in our objection.

• (3:20 p.m.)

I think it is a matter of judgment and a correct assessment that if a member of parliament has 50,000 urban people in his riding and, say, 30,000 or 35,000 rural people, he will soon find that 75 per cent to 90 per cent of his time is spent on rural problems. This is the area in which the tremendous revolution has been occurring in economics. This is where the great personal tragedies have been occurring. The records of this house over the last 30 years indicate the truth of this statement.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize my point with regard to the cities, with the proposals of the commission we would have the people of the two major cities of Saskatchewan feeling they were unrepresented by members in this house who could speak solely on urban problems.

I believe that what I have said about the preponderance of rural over urban problems will change in time many of the matters dealt with in this house. Any person who recognizes the needs of city people will realize that in the next 10 or 20 years the house will be continually inundated with problems that we have not heard before. These problems concern, primarily, built-up areas and so far they have not been adequately expressed in the house. I refer to problems such as the high interest rate paid by the city dweller on furniture, cars and other things he needs for his home. I refer to the mounting cost of urban transportation, amounting to a heavy penalty imposed upon all those who live in large cities. I refer to the increased cost caused by a lack of coherent and integrated planning which is placing a heavy burden on families living in our cities. These problems will come before this house.

Problems of education are common to us all, but because of the tremendous cost of building universities, junior colleges and different classifications of vocational schools in the future, the question of education, which has not been a large matter in this House of Commons over the last 99 years, will soon be