

*Electoral Boundaries Commission*

boundary runs along a meridian, a great deal of difficulty is often encountered. I have at least four Indian reserves in my district and the meridian cuts right through them. It seems ridiculous that two members have to be consulted about the affairs of one Indian reserve when one is dealing, for example, with a complaint. Surely the boundaries of reserves are plain enough. In such cases I should like to see the commissions call on members for advice even if they do not intend to take it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Chairman, I shall be brief. After hearing several hon. members state their opinion on Bill No. C-72 which provides for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions, I wonder if the setting up of ten commissions will not be more confusing than anything else.

I am inclined to believe the hon. member from the western provinces who said a while ago that the cost of establishment and operation of ten commissions would be excessive. In the past, a parliamentary committee and the chief electoral officer were entrusted with redistribution when the occasion arose.

At that time, from all points of view and in every part of the country, that parliamentary committee, composed of representatives of the various political parties, carried on its activities with understanding and honesty, and this to the satisfaction of the voters and the districts concerned.

For instance, I recall that in 1947, at the time we were proceeding with the redistribution of electoral districts in Canada, I was representing Pontiac county which included all the old provincial Pontiac county, the Quebec Temiscamingue county, as well as the Rouyn-Noranda county, part of Abitibi east and part of Abitibi west. At that time, when the commission decided upon or adopted a reorganization or redistribution policy, the members concerned were invited to the committee, and proceedings went along on a friendly basis. My riding was divided in two. In spite of all that was said then about alleged political partisanship and interference in the redistribution, I feel that everything was on the level.

On the other hand, I am of the opinion that ten commissions would create more confusion than anything else. A parliamentary committee that would invite the federal members to discuss and submit their points of view, their objections, if any, would be more normal and more proper.

Ten commissions may oppose two or three provinces to accept a larger representation. For instance, a commission will be set up for the small province of Prince Edward Island, which has only four members of parliament

[*Mr. Bigg.*]

and will cost the same as the commission which will determine the limits of the ridings in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and Quebec. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that all this will be really confusing. And the same thing will happen as when the government, for instance, asked all Canadians to submit a national flag design. At that time, ten thousand flag designs were sent in, when Canada does not have a flag and when the government could have acted to give a flag to the country.

The same thing applies to redistribution, we talk of a 20 per cent margin for a population of 70,000. Others suggest a tolerance of 33½ per cent rather than 20 per cent, giving as a reason that such a tolerance of 33½ per cent would be of a greater help to the rural constituencies.

In this connection, I agree with the hon. member for Compton-Frontenac (Mr. Latulippe) who mentioned earlier that we must protect the rural constituencies not only in Quebec but throughout Canada.

Some rural ridings covering an area of more than 100 square miles are inhabited at the most by 100,000 people, while in cities such as Toronto and Montreal, urban ridings covering one square mile have a population of 100,000 and even more sometimes.

It must also be remembered that in urban ridings, the needs of the people are almost all the same. There is not the diversity that is seen in our rural areas. Thus, for instance, in my own riding, there is a variety of problems related to mining, agriculture and forestry; there are also the everyday problems and even, as pointed out by my hon. friend from Megantic (Mr. Langlois), the unemployment problem.

Such diversity is not found in urban ridings, and in cities like Montreal, some ridings have 25,000 electors, others have 32,000, 33,000 and sometimes even 150,000. We do not object to giving adequate representation to cities like Montreal or Toronto. But we are strongly against any move to decrease representation of rural ridings to the benefit of urban ridings. In fact, I do not think that we could accept such a representation or such a redistribution.

It has already been pointed out that during an election campaign, the representatives of rural ridings must travel thousands of miles, while those in urban ridings have only to go from door to door to meet several hundred electors in the same apartment building.

Mr. Chairman, I do not think that it is the proper time to deal with the establishment of electoral boundaries, since we are only concerned at present with the setting