

Redistribution

Mr. Stewart: New Brunswick.

make only a passing reference, but I do have objection to the general division which has taken place. We in Saskatchewan lost four constituencies. We have gone from 17 to 13. I am not here to enter into political discussion. But we lost tremendously in population from the middle '40s until 1960, a period which happens to be coincidental with socialist government within that province. I do not mention this for any particular purpose; it is just a statement of fact. Alongside are Alberta and Manitoba with free enterprise governments. We in Saskatchewan went back, and we are down to 13 constituencies. It is many years since we had so few.

What was the basis upon which the commission operated? I do not know whom they consulted, but the chairman of the commission, a very good friend of mine over the years, a student in my office, made this statement:

The commission carefully considered each of the representations made but was unable to give effect to any of them.

The report refers to the representations made during various meetings held in all parts of the province. One brief was presented in each of the six centres—Regina, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Weyburn. Surely there would have been one of them that was right. But they were just brushed aside. They talked, and the commission decided there was no basis for their arguments. The chairman goes on to say that the significance of these hearings to the commission was that the proposed map was generally acceptable. I do not know who gave him that impression, for the day the announcement was made, speaking for this party, I criticized the basis upon which the commission had operated, and my statement was given appropriate space in the press reports.

I also pointed out that some action should be taken to assure that we should not lose four constituencies, bearing in mind the vast wealth of our province and multiple developments there, the like of which few hon. members in this house have any realization. We are down to 13 seats. We have reached the position where we shall have about three times the representation of Prince Edward Island. We have reached a position where we have very few more representatives than Nova Scotia. Those two provinces have basic rights; they are assured that the number of their members will not be reduced below a certain level, and that is proper and fitting.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, 12 members. It is proper and fitting that we in our province, with the vast development there and the expansion which is taking place in the field of potash alone—developments which will make wheat and other agricultural products increasingly less important with the passing of the years, should have additional representation. Yet we are to have 13 seats. I think consideration must be given to a constitutional amendment which would provide additional representation for a province as large and as important as Saskatchewan.

• (4:10 p.m.)

The chairman went on to say:

We appreciated the submissions and were sympathetic to them but the commission tried to satisfy itself the implementation of any or all of the changes suggested would result in an over-all improvement.

That is a strange and unusual attitude, that when members from all parts of Saskatchewan appeared before the commission and made representation to the contrary, the commission of four simply said, "You don't know what you are talking about. We don't think your suggestions are worth consideration, and so they are out."

He also said:

We found that in general any attempt to redraw the map to conform with the suggestions did not persuade us any improvement would result.

You, sir, listened to the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Hamilton) today, and though he was limited for time he made a compelling argument to the contrary, and one that cannot be brushed aside. It is an interesting circumstance that for many years, according to some who live in the aura of university training and education, the rural areas were over-represented. Some of the political scientists said it was wrong that the rural areas should not be required basically to have the same population as the urban areas.

I cannot place on the record what I have here in my hand and am showing you, sir, but in the proposed map, schedule D, of Saskatchewan, if you look at the area representing Meadow Lake, the representative of that constituency goes from the city of North Battleford to the north end of Saskatchewan, to Uranium City, a very flourishing place in the northern area. But the commission was not satisfied with that. It also took an area west of Prince Albert up to Big River, an