

Electoral Boundaries Commission

the 33½ per cent tolerance, we shall not regret it, because in 10 or 20 years time, we can always change it.

Finally, I wish to repeat the assertion I made earlier. Whether we accept the 20 per cent or the 33½ per cent tolerance, the political future of rural counties is at stake. Let us not be mistaken; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

[Text]

Mr. Reynold Rapp (Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale): As one who comes from the province of Saskatchewan, the province which according to the bill before us is supposed to lose more ridings than any other province in Canada, I feel it is my duty to take exception to this measure.

I am not asking that special consideration should be given to the province of Saskatchewan, but I should like to bring the case of this agricultural province to the attention of the house and compare it with the situation in other provinces where the population is more condensed and where such a high proportion of the electorate live in industrial cities. To say that the vast area of Saskatchewan can be represented adequately by only 13 members is almost ridiculous. Some of our ridings are immense in extent; they stretch many hundreds of miles in every direction. If redistribution takes place according to the bill, then many municipalities will be cut up even more than when there were 17 ridings in Saskatchewan. School districts will also be affected, many of them to the extent that they too will be cut up and divided. The same applies to hospital areas. According to the bill a 20 per cent tolerance in this respect is allowed; but in an area like Saskatchewan I think 20 per cent is not the right percentage, that it should be at least 33½ per cent. The problem is roughly the same in the province of Manitoba, with 14 members compared with Saskatchewan's 17. Nevertheless we must take into consideration the fact that the province of Manitoba is far more industrialized than the province of Saskatchewan. We have in Saskatchewan large cities, like Saskatoon and Regina, which may also have more than one representative. This will mean that here, too, more members will lose their ridings, mainly in agricultural areas.

I think that when the commissions are set up they should consider that, instead of having 265 members of parliament as we have at the present time, it might be justifiable to increase the number so that these large agricultural areas or other large areas which were previously represented in this house are not cut up to the extent that hardship is created. As I have said, municipalities,

school districts and hospital areas are going to be affected.

As I said at the outset, Mr. Speaker, I am not pleading for Saskatchewan, but I should like to bring to the attention of the house the fact that if this redistribution bill is brought into force these areas I have mentioned will have to be given special consideration. Saskatchewan has the largest number of agricultural areas in Canada. It is not my intention to delay the debate on Bill No. C-72, but I thought I should, as a member from Saskatchewan, take this opportunity of bringing forward the special case of the province of Saskatchewan to the attention of the house.

Mr. R. R. Southam (Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I, too, coming from the province of Saskatchewan, would like to join my colleague from that province in a few short comments on this Bill No. C-72 which has been introduced by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill). It is a bill to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions, and under this proposed legislation I feel that Saskatchewan does require some special provision or consideration. This point was considered when the question of redistribution was discussed in this house in 1952, when the then government under the leadership of the venerable and capable prime minister of the day, the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, felt justified in giving Saskatchewan such consideration. This consideration was supported at that time, I think, by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), whose remarks were recorded at page 1143 of *Hansard* for April 21, 1952. Some of his remarks were referred to by my colleague the hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden); I do not intend to read them again but his comments are worth noting.

The situation in the west is such that approximately 30 per cent of the members of this house come from Manitoba and west of Manitoba, the other 70 per cent coming from eastern Canada. Therefore, with this distribution of our population I feel that western Canada has always had one strike against it as far as representation of areas is concerned. Singling out Saskatchewan by way of example, if the formula proposed in this bill were implemented Saskatchewan, as it has been pointed out, could lose four members. To Saskatchewan this would be approximately a 25 per cent loss of representation, and this to an area of great importance to Canada. As my hon. friend from Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale (Mr. Rapp) pointed out, the importance to Canada's economy of this part of the country is tremendous. Saskatchewan is known as the bread basket of the world, and