

*Electoral Boundaries*

the province of Quebec should not be part of the riding of Shefford but of another riding.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that the Eastern Townships throughway, for instance, is the backbone of the Shefford riding and when using it it hardly takes twenty minutes to go from one end of the city to the other. Surely this explains that the commissioners have been able to keep Rock Forest in the Shefford riding.

I only refer to a few small examples in order to point out how difficult it is to get satisfaction. If we want to be parochial or personal about it, I would be compelled to say I am really sorry to see my riding completely dismantled and that in my short political career of 12 years, it is the third time that my riding is completely changed. Of course, this will oblige me to establish all the new necessary political relationships.

The Electoral Commission is not here to please honourable members but—and it may be a bit idealistic to speak in this way—to discharge a mandate intended to better distribute the number of seats each province must have and to take specific criteria under consideration.

I think that in Montreal, for instance, the Electoral Commission has heard representations during appeals that were held in September and it took them into account especially as regards downtown and lower town in the city of Montreal. The Commission realized that it was reasonable to have ridings with north to south rather than east to west relationship. They realized that problems created at that time were almost impossible to overcome by any one member alone. I think the Commission was very wise in recognizing that situation and agreeing to the request made to them in Montreal when they held hearings in the Court of Montreal last September.

Mr. Speaker, I would like my riding to remain unchanged as well, but it is impossible. I regret as other honourable members do, I am sure, the parts of the constituency I represent that I should normally lose should I run in the next general election and that will go to another riding.

Mr. Speaker, the commission had a duty to fulfil, and I shall conclude my remarks with what I have said earlier, that the commission had clear and specific terms of reference. They are not responsible for the error made by lawmakers in not allowing them to take into account future developments in population transfers.

This could have allowed the commission to give three constituencies to Laval Island. This would have been an excellent suggestion. But the commission remained within their terms of reference. I therefore suggest that we, as lawmakers, or our successors think of the terms of reference we will have to issue to future redistribution commissions, in order that commissioners in various provinces may base their judgments and redistributions within each province on population moves that may happen between the time of their analyses and the next election.

Mr. Speaker, such is not the case today. Therefore, I feel the commissioners would be well advised and fully justified to come down with an electoral map quite similar to the one we have been discussing today, even though each one of us may feel sad about it.

[Mr. Prud'homme.]

I know my remarks are not that popular. But such is the way a member must speak in this House, even at this late hour.

Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to say in conclusion, that I hope, as I said at the beginning and all through my comments, that in the future, Parliament, or the legislators will be very careful when a redistribution of the electoral districts will again be required and that they will make sure that the terms of reference which are given to the commissioners reflect the objectives of the House of Commons; meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I think the commissioners must be commended for the efforts they have made and those who believe that the urban ridings have more people than the rural ridings have the right to think so. I represent an urban riding myself and I would like to see as everybody else does, an equal number of people all across the province but we have to recognize the vastness of the territory covered by some rural constituencies with all the problems this implies. It is, therefore, only normal that the urban ridings of metropolitan centres such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver should have more people than rural ridings. The commissioners have taken this fact into consideration as the law allows them to do so, since they were allowed margin of 25 per cent above or under their quotients.

In most electoral districts which I have examined across Canada, the redistribution they propose seems very wise. All they have to do now is to be good enough to read carefully the speeches delivered by the members of each province, and see if it would not be possible, not so much as to please the members of Parliament because I think this would be a little too personal as I said at the beginning of my remarks, and I would be myself inclined to make vigorous representations so that my native parish stays within the riding that I represent.

Admittedly, these are very personal remarks and even if I do hope for it, it should not be discussed in the House. What the commission must keep in mind is to consider again, in the light of all these representations whether they are all acceptable while keeping in mind the terms of reference of the Commission which requires that it must take into account only the population figure as obtained on the day, the census was made.

The error is not theirs but Parliament's in that it keeps the gap between rural and urban ridings. Let me give you as an example the riding of Richmond versus that of Sherbrooke; it is normal for the riding of Sherbrooke to have more population than that of Richmond. That is acceptable, and can be justified with the people, because it is logical.

Mr. Speaker, I close in thanking you for your patience. I feel the commission gave us a reasonable report and, reasonable as we know its members are, they will surely consider as much as possible the representations that are being made in this House; if they can, they will present us with a map that corresponds somewhat to those wishes, but they will change nothing for the fun of changing or of pleasing, and only as a result of representations that are not personal but concerned instead with the welfare and well-being of the people we represent.