

Electoral Boundaries

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I understand the concern shown by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) but I believe it should have been provided at the outset that speeches should be limited to 10 minutes. This formula should have been adopted yesterday. Yesterday, members who had the opportunity to get the floor were allowed to speak for as long as they wished; in other words, those who wanted to take 20 minutes did take 20 minutes, those who wanted to take 10 minutes took 10 minutes.

On behalf on my party, I do not want to shoulder the responsibility of expressing the views of my colleagues without having consulted them, as well as my leader. That is why I would like to ask the Chair to allow me to consult them before giving my final decision. I am quite prepared to limit my speech to 10 minutes. However I believe it will be impossible since I am living in one of the most "chopped up" ridings in the province of Quebec and I would like to have the opportunity to make my point. Anyway, I will try to contact my leader and in a few minutes I will give you a definite answer.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): I suggest that we leave the question for the time being. Perhaps the House leaders could meet and agree to limit speeches to 10 or 15 minutes. Until they report, perhaps we could carry on.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I shall keep my remarks brief and allow my colleagues to put their comments on record. I shall talk about redistribution in Ontario. I, with others on my side, signed the objection filed by the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick). My objections to the commission's proposals relate strictly to the points raised by the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton. I signed the objection to give hon. members the opportunity to address themselves to the points raised in it.

I shall now deal briefly with my constituency. I suppose most members of parliament do not like to see redistribution taking place. It is impossible, after representing a rural constituency for several years and becoming better acquainted with constituents and their problems, not to harbour reservations about redistribution. Members representing rural constituencies are especially concerned as with each successive redistribution the number of rural seats declines and the number of urban seats rises. That means that after each redistribution it is more difficult to make the voice of rural Canadians heard in parliament. Therefore, the people of my area do not altogether like this redistribution. They do not like the idea that rural Canadians will have a diminished voice in the House of Commons. We know that it is necessary and equitable: we know that after every census, redistribution should more accurately reflect the demographic changes which took place in the previous ten years.

I shall voice some of the immediate concerns of my constituents. The proposed redistribution will radically alter our constituency. No member of parliament who has a good working relationship with his constituents likes to

see constituents taken away from him and placed in another constituency. You develop a sense of loyalty to your constituents, a working relationship which may be difficult to reestablish from scratch, as it were, after redistribution. Thus, when new boundaries are drawn, difficulties for members and constituents are created. Sometimes constituents do not know to which constituency they belong. There is initial confusion.

Having said that, allow me to commend the Electoral Boundaries Commission working in Ontario for the excellent work it has done. It was forced to make a number of changes about which I harbour reservations, as do other members of parliament, I am sure, whose constituencies will be affected. Having examined the final report, I am convinced that the commission considered my representations and the representations of constituents. It listened to representations made by two municipal bodies in my constituency, those of the town of Wellesley and of Mount Forest. Those two town councils passed resolutions asking that the proposals they were making to the commission be considered. The commission considered both proposals, and the proposed changes are acceptable to the people of the areas concerned. Mr. Justice Campbell Grant deserves great credit for the tremendous work he did, and the members of the commission deserve the approbation of members of parliament representing Ontario constituencies for the work done in connection with redistribution.

Clearly, the commission tried to do two things. It tried to take cognizance of local concerns expressed by members of parliament and delegations appearing before the commission, and it tried to take into account the community of interest as made evident to the commission. The commission did something else. It tried to simplify constituency boundaries and make them conform as much as possible to municipal and provincial boundaries.

● (1610)

At the present time, I represent three counties and one regional municipality.

I should make it clear that I am extremely conscious of the fact that one of the aims of an Electoral Boundaries Commission should be to make it easier for a member of parliament to represent the whole of the area which falls within his boundaries, to make it easier for the people in the municipalities, when presenting briefs to government, to establish well ordered lines of communication with the government. These are things which the boundaries commission has tried to do.

There are one or two other points I would like to make. This is the fourth set of maps which has been drawn up by the commission. It is clear that a tremendous effort has been made and that this has been done at tremendous public cost. I would hate to see the commission sent back to the drawing board and told to start over from scratch as a result of the objections which have been raised. I do not share the doubt expressed by some members as to whether the commission was acting within its mandate. I have no doubt it was, and I believe it tried to discharge its responsibilities in a responsible and effective way.

Before the closing, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that there is need for an early decision on this issue. It is a matter which has dragged on for some years. The census on