

would assist the commission. They would be on the same wavelength, if I may express it in that way.

The electoral boundaries commissioner then made a suggestion to the committee. He said, in effect, "Why not go a little further, and instead of requiring reasons just in the report that is tabled in parliament, also put the reasons in the newspaper along with the maps that are to be drawn, so that the citizens as well can study those reasons. Then, when they go to the public hearings they will be able to speak on the same wavelength that has brought the commission to the conclusion that it should draw the maps in a certain way?" Members of the committee thought that this was a good idea and the amendment was expanded to take it into account. Here was a recommendation by the commissioner himself, a man who sat on the Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario. He encouraged this process, yet when, acting as an adviser, he brought forward the original proposals and then this report, there was no evidence of the reasons which he himself had suggested.

I have already mentioned the first course of action, the unilateral action of the commission, and the second, that the government should seek a reference from the House to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. The third course of action would be a private reference to a court of proper jurisdiction for judicial determination. Surely it is important to all of us in this House that the laws of parliament be upheld by the commissions we appoint, to exactly the same degree as we expect compliance with the laws by any private citizen.

I began by saying that this report now being debated is incomplete and improper. I wish now to go a step further and suggest that it is also insensitive. The report is insensitive on at least two counts. First, it is insensitive to what parliament intends with respect to the entire process of redistribution. As the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) pointed out earlier, what parliament intends with respect to an act such as the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act and the Canada Elections Act is of the utmost importance. The spirit behind the law is of equal importance to, or even more important than, just the letter of the law as may be the case with most other kinds of legislation where interpretation by the courts is required. I said that the report of the commission of Ontario is insensitive on two counts. In addition to being insensitive to what parliament intends, it is insensitive to the overwhelming expression of opinion voiced by the people of northern Ontario.

It is perfectly clear that in everything parliament has done to date regarding the matter of redistribution, it wants the people of Canada to be as well represented as possible. It has taken a number of actions to ensure that this is so. First of all, by increasing the total number of members of the House of Commons, parliament sought to protect certain areas of Canada from losing seats. It has done so by providing floor provisions for certain provinces where the population is growing less rapidly than it is in other regions of Canada. That is an action that I can understand, one I applaud and accept. It is fundamental that this be done by parliament, and parliament has done it.

Secondly, parliament has departed from the strict principle of representation by population by adding a second seat in the Northwest Territories, again a decision that we

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all welcome. It is something that should be done in view of the vast area that has to be represented, even though there are comparatively few people who inhabit that great area of Canada. Thirdly, to protect representation in the less populated and less developed regions within a province, the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act provides for a 25 per cent tolerance below the quotient for any province. Of course, to offset that, it also allows for a 25 per cent tolerance above the quotient in the urban areas where representation takes on another kind of quality to that of the less populated areas of Canada.

● (1630)

Each of these steps taken by parliament declares unequivocally that in order to maintain the nature of Canadian confederation, exceptions must be made to the principle of representation by population. This brings me directly to the situation which the commission seeks to create in northern Ontario.

For the information of hon. members, let me point out that northern Ontario is that region of the province which lies north of the French River and constitutes four-fifths, or 80 per cent, of the land mass of the province of Ontario. That is what we are talking about here. At the present time, the people of northern Ontario are represented in this House by 12 members of parliament. In the parliament which follows this one, the province of Ontario as a whole is to be allocated an additional seven seats. All of these, quite understandably, will go to the more heavily populated southern part of the province. There is no argument about that at all. That area has been growing rapidly in population. Some of the members here represent a much greater number of citizens than others, and there has to be something done to alleviate that serious situation. The seven seats will all go to that more heavily populated area.

Some hon. members of this House expressed as much shock and as much dismay as have the citizens of northern Ontario when they learned that the commission was proposing a reduction of representation in the region of northern Ontario, comprises 80 per cent of the land mass of Ontario, from 12 seats to 11. They did not have to do this. I am led to believe that some members of the commission proposed, in the strongest terms possible, that this not be done. How could they have avoided taking such a serious and drastic step, denying the people of that region of the province of Ontario the representation they deserve? They could have done so by using more fully the 25 per cent tolerance factor which the redistribution act allows them to do. If they had done that, the present level of representation in northern Ontario could have been maintained. They did not even have to go to the full limit of that 25 per cent tolerance. The quotient for Ontario is 81,085 and the minimum permitted, using the full 25 per cent tolerance, would be 60,814. The average population of the 11 ridings now proposed by the commission in this report is 70,413, well above the minimum permitted. If 12 ridings were maintained, the average would be 62,046. You can see, sir, that this is well within the terms of the act.

I submit that it was the intent of parliament that the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act be used in this very way. I urge the commission once more to reconsider its decision and to deal justly with northern Ontario. After