

Redistribution

in representation. If we accept the glaring inequalities that have been put forward, then what is the sense of going through the form of having redistribution? I always understood the purpose of redistribution was to take account of shifts in population during the previous decennial period, and eliminate consequent inequalities. I understood that to be the guiding purpose of redistribution, subject of course to the recognized fact that we take account of area and give weighted representation to the rural areas.

Here is the proposal by the majority of the committee, as supported by the hon. member for Lincoln. Lincoln will be left with 89,366 population; it is to be unchanged. It is proposed that Brant, that is the county of Brant outside the riding of Brantford, and the county of Haldimand be merged together, with a population in round figures of 49,000.

Mr. McIlraith: It is 45,000; you take off 3,000 for Brantford.

Mr. Fleming: That would leave 46,000. The figure the hon. member gave in the committee when adding the country of Brant to the county of Haldimand was 48,979, and from that was subtracted a small area alongside the city of Brantford which is now to be placed in the riding of Brantford.

Mr. McIlraith: The net figure is 45,000.

Mr. Fleming: We will not argue over a few hundred, as we have bigger fish to fry here. Wentworth will have a population of 54,000 under the proposal by the majority of the committee. Let me give those figures again so the committee and those interested in trying to see that justice is done, in trying to achieve some equality of representation in this house will have the details of the situation they are being asked to create. The figures are 89,000, 54,000 and 45,000.

What is the proposal of the opposition? We propose, as I have indicated before—I do not wish to repeat what I said—that five townships at the west end of Lincoln county should be joined to Haldimand, thereby reducing Lincoln to 70,000. That is quite enough for any one member to handle. The remainder of the riding would consist of rural townships as well as the important city of St. Catharines. Under the suggestion we make Wentworth riding would have a population of 48,000. Haldimand with these five townships from Lincoln would have a population of 43,000 and the riding of Brant would have a population of 37,000. Put them alongside each other, Mr. Chairman. There you have three rural ridings with proposed populations of 37,000, 43,000 and 48,000, and you have the remainder of the riding of Lincoln with a population of 70,000, something over half of which would be in the city of St. Catharines.

I put it to the committee that that is a fair and equitable distribution of that area; but put that alongside what is proposed by the main committee, 89,000, 54,000 and 45,000.

An hon. Member: Bingo.

Mr. Fleming: Can anybody say that is a fair distribution of population where one riding would have twice the population of an adjoining riding, and where the riding with the population of 89,000 has a number of rural townships in it? In my submission, to state figures like that is in the estimation of sensible people to condemn completely what has been proposed by the government majority without regard whatever to the fact that the nub of what has been proposed by the government majority is to link together two ridings or counties which are represented at the present time by Progressive Conservative members of the house.

The hon. member for Lincoln said: "Our occupation is a little different in Lincoln, and we have no connection with Haldimand." The county of Haldimand does not disappear. The county of Haldimand has to go somewhere in this redistribution.

An hon. Member: Good.

Mr. Fleming: What do the government members of the committee report? What do they propose? They propose that it be added to Brant county. I am here to tell you that the county of Haldimand has just as much in common with the county of Lincoln, just as much to connect it with the county of Lincoln, as it has in common with the county of Brant or to connect it with the county of Brant. That argument is not worth anything.

An hon. Member: In your opinion.

Mr. Fleming: It would be different if the county of Haldimand were being obliterated from the map, but that is not what is happening. It must go somewhere. The hon. member for Lincoln says it has nothing to do with them, so what is proposed instead is that every person living in the county of Lincoln should have the fraction of representation in the House of Commons of one over 89,366. That is what is proposed for the county of Lincoln; and the fear is expressed that if these five townships are included with Haldimand at this time to make a sensible riding it will neutralize the chances at the next decennial redistribution of having the riding of Lincoln cut in half.

Isn't that a fine argument for avoiding the drawing of a line down the county of Lincoln today, that ten years from now they may want a different line drawn through the county? We are told today that the drawing of any line now is unthinkable, and we are