

*Electoral Boundaries*

that would make 281 and if I can trust my arithmetic, again, I do not think that includes two seats for the Northwest Territories. It would have to be 282 seats for the Northwest Territories to have two seats. On behalf of my colleague from the Northwest Territories and of the people up there, I hope the minister will confirm that intention tonight. Otherwise, we are prepared to let this bill have third reading at this time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments during the consideration of the bill to show to the cabinet the importance given by my constituents to a fair representation of rural residents in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, the electoral boundaries of the Bellechasse constituency were greatly altered in 1965 as a result of a readjustment. During that same year, Parliament passed a legislation appointing an independent commission in each province responsible for reviewing representation in the House. This year, the present bill provides some change which, I hope, will satisfy the citizens of rural constituencies. Before 1968, my constituents were represented in the House by three members, that is in the constituencies of Dorchester, Montmagny and Bellechasse.

It goes without saying that the citizens of Dorchester and Montmagny constituencies have been frustrated because the names of their ridings have been removed, but I understand that there has been some development, that some changes are imperative. It is necessary to bring about certain changes in representation, not only in the House, but throughout Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would like much that the few considerations I want to make tonight be kept in mind in order that, after the bill has been adopted, we can effectively attempt to make verifications that would be fair to rural populations.

I think that the first factor is as follows: the changes should be reduced to a minimum between the redistribution of electoral districts and the changes at the ridings' boundaries, and I will tell you why. Since men are the slaves of their own habits, we should, as far as possible, avoid radical changes in constituencies. I think that is a basic principle we should consider in order not to overly upset the habits and lifestyles of a given environment.

We must rather seek a relative permanence and set the limits so as to facilitate the adaptation of electoral districts to an increasing population, and ensure that the least amendments possible will be necessary in the future. I think we are crossing a line; what we are doing through this bill is setting up patterns of living for generations, at least for the twentieth century, and I would like us, in the amendments that will be made in the future, to avoid upsetting the customs too soon, as I said previously, in a given territory.

The main factor to be considered when electing a member to the House of Commons is to have members who are truly representative of the region. They must respect the social and economic patterns of living of the people in the ridings they want to represent. In recent months, I personally consulted some of my constituents and found that a very great majority were aware of the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

important element of cultural, geographical, economic and social unity or identity, which means that in a rural environment such as the riding I represent people want to keep customs, the possibility of better knowing one another in a given territory so the established customs can continue to be part of their lives to the benefit of everyone and those customs will be guaranteed by an act of Parliament that will not upset every 10 years the already established habits and customs.

Following the remarks that were made to me and from the experience I acquired in this House since I came here, I often find that members representing rural ridings are overloaded with work compared to members representing urban ridings. I would say the same thing if I were a member representing an urban riding because one only has to look at the way things are done to realize that.

Since the last redistribution rural riding were geographically enlarged, as everyone knows, which forces the member representing them to travel miles and miles every weekend if he wants to keep in close touch with his constituents. This contact is becoming increasingly more necessary if we want hon. members to make necessary representations knowingly and in due course.

In view of these difficult times, it is more and more important for an hon. member, within a limited area, to know the individuals and families he represents, their trades, professions, living conditions and incomes, so as to be in a position to make in the House representations which are likely to help them avail themselves more of the material, cultural and social opportunities available in this country.

This is why, following the adoption of this bill, I am asking that the officials who will be appointed to carry out the distribution in line with the date contained in this bill avoid, as much as possible, changes which might alter the living conditions of some foreign parishes in rural areas when they are moved from one constituency to another.

Finally, I wish we would take advantage of quotients and of the percentage of the difference as mentioned in the bill, in order to provide for larger or smaller constituencies, and to assure them that they will get a fair and just representation in this House if they really are still to be heard in this House, so that their rights may be recognized and defended, and farmers may tell Parliament when they want to have an act amended or to be granted some privileges, and enjoy some sort of security.

Mr. Speaker, if that is not provided for, I think we shall be doing Canadian people as a whole a bad service, and more and more rural citizens will have to complain of being denied the advantage of having enough members in the House of Commons to voice their appropriate claims. If we deny them that, there will soon be more and more members of Parliament who will be totally ignorant of the problems of rural citizens, and we shall then bear the consequences of such a bill because, whether we like it or not, agriculture is and will always remain the main industry in our country, since it aims at providing each and everyone of us with food, at meeting the food needs of the whole Canadian population. I should therefore wish the few representations I wanted to make tonight on behalf of rural citizens from Quebec and throughout Canada would be remembered.