Electoral Boundaries

It is the very essence of our constitution that we should endeavour to have all provinces fairly represented, and the views of all provinces accepted in this parliament insofar as we can attain that end.

This is from the *House of Commons Debates* for that year, at page 329.

The redistribution method embodied in this bill reflects this concern. Thus, the method provides as a general rule that no province shall suffer a decrease in representation in this House. Principles of equity also require general rules to the effect that no province shall have fewer seats than a province with a smaller population or a number of seats which would give it an average constituency population greater than that of Quebec, excepting a difference in the latter case which results from the fourth general rule that all fractions appearing in numbers representing seat totals should be dropped. The rule making the average constituency population of Quebec the maximum possible was inadvertently omitted in earlier descriptions of the method, but is obviously necessary to ensure that no province receives fewer members in relation to population than the largest provinces.

The method provides that Quebec should receive a fixed number of seats after each decennial census and divides the other provinces into three categories to which specific rules are applied. Provinces with populations over 2,500,-000 will receive the number of seats determined by dividing the average constituency population of Quebec into their respective populations.

If the population of a province is less than 1,500,000, but has increased since the previous decennial census, its representation will be determined by dividing its population by the average constituency population at the previous redistribution of the provinces with a population of less than 1,500,000 according to the previous decennial census.

If the population of a province is 1,500,000 to 2,500,000 and has increased since the previous decennial census, it will be allocated a number of seats determined by increasing its total number of seats by one seat for every two that it would have received were it to have the same average constituency population of the province with the largest average constituency population of provinces with a population of under 1,500,000.

If a province has a population that has decreased since the previous decennial census and is below 2,500,000 its representation will be unchanged.

Representation by population remains a treasured goal and constitutes an integral aspect of this method of redistribution. The largest provinces will have numbers of members calculated on a representation by population basis relative to the province of Quebec. Within the group of the smallest provinces, representation by population will prevail except to the extent that the floor provisions may apply. Continued population growth in the small provinces would reduce their reliance on these floor provisions and lead to a greater degree of representation by population.

The aims of maintaining effective representation for all provinces and of progressing toward representation by population together determine the relationships between the respective total numbers of members to be accorded to

[Mr. Sharp.]

each province. There is a second equally important aspect to which much consideration has been given, and that is the number of members in the House of Commons.

The amalgam method was devised as a means of ensuring that the population size of constituencies in Canada would not grow to a point where a member's ability to represent his constituents would be impaired, nor the access of constituents to their member unduly restricted.

● (1540)

Whatever the energy and dedication of a member, there is a limit to the number of constituents he can properly represent. At the same time, a member's effectiveness in representing his constituents in the House of Commons can be diluted if the size of the House is allowed to grow unchecked. This bill represents an attempt to strike a reasonable balance, and to ensure that all of the people of Canada will continue to be well represented by their members, both inside and outside the House of Commons.

If and when this bill becomes law, the number of members representing provinces will increase from the present level of 262—here I would remind hon. members that two electoral seats among our 264 are represented by members from the territories—to 277 at the next redistribution based on the 1971 census. Thereafter, the results depend upon the population at each succeeding decennial census.

By providing for the addition of four seats to the representation of the Province of Quebec at the time of each redistribution, certain assumptions are implied as to population growth both for Canada and for the Province of Quebec. Should these assumptions prove to be wide of the mark, parliament may choose at some later date to add fewer or more seats to Quebec, which is the pivot of the whole system, as it was until the law was last amended. All we can do at the present time is to establish a system which appears now to be reasonable.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I should like to have the consent of the House to place in *Hansard* an illustrative table showing the distribution of seats by provinces as envisaged by the bill before us, following the next redistribution as compared with the present system of distribution, and the redistribution if there were to be no changes. The table also includes a forecast of the redistribution following the 1981 census on the basis of certain assumptions as to the population of the provinces in 1981. The assumption which is used in the table is that the population of the provinces in 1981 will be 23,967,800, in accordance with the projection which came from Statistics Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Is it agreed that the hon. minister be allowed to table the said document?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Is this the table which was attached to the minister's press release of October 12? If so, we have all seen it and we shall be glad to have it included.

Mr. Sharp: I can assure the hon. member it is the same table. The calculations were redone, and turned out the same.