

their satisfaction with the problems they refer to us. I believe that the mere fact that the Social Crediters have been elected at every general election in those ridings since 1962 shows that we do our job as the people want. The citizens of the northwest are satisfied with our work as federal members.

However, Mr. Speaker, to do away with a riding in the northwest might place an overwhelming burden on the members of that area. It is hard enough to cover hundreds and hundreds of miles to travel across the constituency. If the size of the riding is doubled as required by the present redistribution, it will take an angel with wings or a superman to serve everyone as they expect to be by their member.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, I object to the redistribution bill submitted by the commissioners. Whatever system is used for the redistribution, it is nonsensical to have only two ridings in an area as vast as northwest Quebec. The other point I want to stress today, Mr. Speaker, is the gross injustice done to the area I represent compared to other Quebec areas such as the Gaspé peninsula. In the bill tabled in the House, the three Gaspé area ridings hardly include 180,000 constituents, while in the northwest, the two proposed ridings contain more than 171,000 constituents.

How is it, Mr. Speaker that there are three members for the Gaspé area and only two for northwest Quebec for an almost identical number of constituents? All the more as the northwest Quebec constituencies cover a far larger territory. I do not mean to say, Mr. Speaker that the Gaspé area should lose a riding. Indeed I think it is large enough to be represented by three members of Parliament but I also believe that northwest Quebec with its vast territory and its population which, according to the last census, has only 10,000 fewer constituents than the Gaspé peninsula, should have at least three members as well in the House of Commons.

It should also be noted that the census on the basis of which the actual proposals for a redistribution have been made does not take into account the fact that thousands of workers live on the James Bay working sites. Even if the commissioners are to work from the 1971 census, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the James Bay workers will go on living there for many years to come. They will still be there when the next elections take place and they should have been taken into account when redesigning the electoral map for these voters are also entitled to have a representative worthy of speaking for them in the House of Commons.

This, Mr. Speaker, means that the Villeneuve and Abitibi ridings have each at least 5,000 more electors than is shown from the figures used to revise the electoral map. With all the work that is being done on the James Bay development sites, we can be sure that the number of voters will still be increasing at a very fast rate in the next few years. So, Mr. Speaker, it should be logical that they be provided for. This is what I ask the commissioners, when they read the Hansard, so that they can give a fair ruling in the case of the people of Abitibi.

We must recognize that the Villeneuve and Abitibi ridings have more voters than all three ridings in the Gaspé peninsula. On the proposed map, our huge ridings in Northwestern Quebec have a much larger population than

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some urban ridings like Langelier, which has 86,073 people as against 88,164 for the Témiscamingue riding, or that of Hull which has 81,195 people as against 83,667 for the Abitibi riding. We could give many other examples such as Montmorency or Saint-Jean, or even Berthier which has 67,000 people, I think.

These urban ridings cover hardly three or four blocks. In these cases, the representative just need a "little walk" to go from one end of his riding to the other. These ridings are so small that you can hardly see them on the electoral map proposed by the commissioners. On the contrary, the Témiscamingue and Abitibi ridings are easy to see. In fact, those constituencies cover more than half of the map we are studying today. Mr. Speaker, I can say without any apprehension that giving such large ridings to members of Parliament does not make any sense. The tremendous distances between the various municipalities in one of the northwestern constituencies should be compensated by a smaller number of people. This is not the case with the electoral map discussed today. This map gives to the northwestern constituencies more people than many an urban one.

If we were to cut out three constituencies from the two proposed constituencies, the average number of people per constituency would be over 57,000. In the Gaspé Peninsula, the average per constituency is hardly 61,000 people. If we take into consideration the workers living in the James Bay area, it is obvious that the average for the northwest, even with three constituencies, would be higher than that for the Gaspé Peninsula ridings. If we wanted to apply strictly the rules governing redistribution, it would always be possible to take the three thousand people missing in each of the three constituencies which could be set up in the northwest in the neighbouring constituencies. It would be more logical to increase the area of existing constituencies by a few square miles than to bluntly eliminate a constituency, thus doubling the area of the two remaining ones.

I suggest the commissioners should consider this possibility in order to avoid creating two rural ridings that would have more voters than any of several urban ridings. All the more so, since these two ridings are the largest in the Province of Quebec. That is what I am suggesting to the commissioners today.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, I would like to point out the fact that the population generally and that of Northwestern Quebec in particular, find it very difficult to accept this proposal. Considering the very different treatment given to the Gaspé Peninsula and Northwestern Quebec, several people do not hesitate to say that Gaspé has obtained three ridings while our northwestern region has obtained only two.

Mr. Speaker, when we consider the objectives that the commissioners should strive to reach we can see, as several other members have already pointed out,—and I would also like to emphasize it,—it was expected of the commissioners to keep municipal unity wherever the situation allowed it, by compensating in some areas like Gaspé, the Saguenay, Lake St. John, Abitibi, Pontiac-Témiscamingue, the low density of population by attributing a quotient substantially lower than the one prevailing in the cities.