

Electoral Boundaries

find that Alberta has a population of 1,628,000. It has 20 seats, which works out at about 80,000 per constituency. Quebec, with a population of 6,028,000 has 75 seats. That works out to about 83,000 per constituency. The hon. member had better go back to school.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the 1971 census shows Alberta with a population of 1,627,900. You divide that by 20. That is not too difficult; just drop the zero and divide by two. You get 81,400 which is 1,000 more per constituency than the province of Quebec.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member's arithmetic is wrong, Mr. Speaker, completely wrong.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to give the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) a tutorial on arithmetic later. At the moment he is inaccurate.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: He is also inaccurate about the amendment. All the amendment says is that if the formula which is used for the intermediate or small provinces happens to give an average constituency population larger than Quebec, it may be treated like a large province. On that basis, British Columbia gets an extra seat, Alberta does not. We still end up with the largest constituency population in the country, as does British Columbia.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Not so.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to table some arithmetic if it would help the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre understand. The fact of the matter is that all of this arithmetic which has been cited is galling to anyone with a sense of fair play or with half a brain. We were told the government was coming out with a method that would give us some favoured treatment because we only had 20 per cent of the population of the large central provinces. We were told that this method of redistribution would give us a little better treatment. However, if you look at the formula that has been proposed, that is not the case at all.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andre: The Liberals have been less than honest and less than forthright in their presentation of this bill. They provided no opportunity for members of this House to discuss this bill. They provided no opportunity for public discussion of the redistribution method. In fact, they are simply using the very legitimate arguments and concerns of members from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland to improve the position of the Liberal party within the country.

Mr. Goyer: Saskatchewan? Thanks.

Mr. Sharp: Thank you very much.

Mr. Andre: If this is damaging to the country and damaging to federalism, they apparently do not care.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Woolliams: You have them all worked up.

Mr. Andre: If you have a comment, make it loud enough so I can hear it or keep it down. There are a number of reasons why this bill should be opposed. First, contrary to government promises, there has been insufficient examination of the method. Second, it calls for unlimited growth of the House of Commons, which I am sure the people of Canada do not want. It will be detrimental to the efficiency and effectiveness of this House. It will serve only to increase the authority of the executive branch of the government and to diminish the authority of the legislative branch.

This amalgam method is a movement away from the protection of the small provinces. Under the existing method, the small provinces have 22 per cent of the seats and would retain roughly that proportion. If the proposed method is accepted, the proportion of seats would drop to 18 per cent within the next 25 years. Therefore, this method in fact moves away from protecting the small provinces. It is not consistent with protecting a strong federal union.

Fourth, it is gerrymandering. The government has developed a method which ends up with Alberta and British Columbia having the largest constituency population. It is part of the never ending stream of moves which goes a long way toward explaining western alienation and a whole lot of problems associated with it. This method does not address itself to the fundamental problems of a federal system within Canada.

Mr. Benjamin: What would you do?

Mr. Andre: If you will give us an opportunity, we will tell you. We have a multitude of proposals. We have been discussing the bill in principle and this bill must be opposed by anybody who has any principles.

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, discussions regarding redistribution always start out with ideological and philosophical statements.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is the hon. member rising on a question or is he rising to make a speech?

Mr. Wenman: To make a speech.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding he was rising on a question. There has not been a speaker from this side since the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) made his presentation earlier today. I think there should be representation from this side as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): May I say to the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Reid) that the Chair looked to his right. No member stood in his place. The hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman) stood and was recognized. The hon. member for Fraser Valley West has the floor for the purpose of making a speech.

Mr. Wenman: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that very correct and fair ruling. As I was saying, discussions usually start on a rather ideological and philosophical base.