

*Electoral Boundaries Commission*

Smith (Winnipeg North)	Thrasher
Souham	Tremblay
Starr	Tucker
Stefanson	Villeneuve
Stewart	Walker
Tardif	Webb
Taylor	Webster—132.
Thomas	

## NAYS

Messrs:

Fisher	Martin (Timmins)
Herridge	Peters
Howard	Winch—6.

Bill read the third time and passed.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES  
COMMISSION

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister)** moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure respecting the establishment of an electoral boundaries commission for the readjustment of representation in the House of Commons; to provide that certain members of the commission may be paid such per diem allowance as may be fixed by the governor in council; to provide for the payment of reasonable travelling and living expenses for the members of the commission; and to provide also that the commission may engage the services of such technical advisers and other staff, including a person to act as secretary to the commission, as it deems necessary.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Chown in the chair.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** After the vicissitudes of the day, Mr. Chairman, we come now to a matter on which I hope there will be a reasonable degree of agreement. I would have wished to have placed the bill before the committee. That would have permitted a fuller and more complete examination of the matters relevant to this resolution. However, that opportunity is denied. I shall therefore proceed to outline in a general way something of the history of redistribution in Canada and the views expressed in other years by various prime ministers of this country. I shall, as well, place before the committee, without that detail I would have hoped would have been possible, the general purport of the bill which will be presented to the house.

In the speech from the throne on January 18 the following appeared:

My government will ask you to take steps to ensure that the forthcoming redistribution of electoral districts is made in an equitable manner upon an objective basis. To this end you will be asked to approve for the first time in our history a measure to create an independent commission to recommend the changes required in the electoral districts as a result of the decennial census.

Shortly put, the objective we have in mind in the bill that will be presented is to place redistribution in the hands of a non-partisan

commission in order to remove and eliminate the abuses of the past. I do not intend to go into any detail regarding some abuses that took place in recent redistributions, although I have some personal knowledge of what was done.

Indeed, I doubt whether I could have ever become Prime Minister if it had not been for the operations performed on two successive occasions on the constituency I represented. Therefore, I can be extremely objective and most appreciative of what was done. However, I realize that there was a need for a change to be made in what had become a decennial or semi-decennial opportunity for the majority in the House of Commons to so carve up constituencies as to—it was hoped—inure to the benefit of the government of the day.

We dealt with this matter on a number of occasions. It was dealt with in this house in 1947 and again in 1952. On both occasions we placed before the house the suggestion that the antiquated system of endeavouring to make redistribution a means whereby the will of the people might be circumvented in certain cases, or political opponents whose presence in the house was not desired by the government of the day could be eliminated, should be altered. We said there should be set up a commission that would objectively study this question. That, too, was an undertaking given during the election campaigns of 1957 and 1958.

We all know that from 1867 on, the decennial exhibition that parliament gave was not such as was in keeping with the preservation of democratic representation through reasonable equalization of representation by population. That principle, of course, cannot be adopted. There must be some exception. The adoption of this principle without any qualification would mean that, as the urban population of Canada increases and as the tremendous surge continues from the rural parts into the cities and in particular to the suburbs of cities, the rural areas would have an almost negligible representation.

The same problem was faced in the United States by its supreme court in a judgment that was rendered some three weeks ago in the case of *Baker v. Carr* in which that court dealt with the situation in Tennessee where, as the result of following principles other than those which all of us intend and expect should be followed, a very small proportion of the population was able in that state to control the outcome of the election in that state. We undertook to see to it that never again would redistribution be made an objective of party policy directed by a government. We did so because we believe that the will of the people should not be thwarted or