

Electoral Boundaries Commission

I should like them to reflect upon the exceptions that have been made to the representation by population principle. Mark you, when people in the past were talking about redistribution, they always mentioned the necessity of equalizing the many constituencies. Sir Wilfrid Laurier suggested the population should be equalized between the constituencies of Canada; that municipal boundaries should be considered and there should be a larger number of people in urban than in rural constituencies. Sir Robert Borden agreed with that attitude and added that attention should be paid to community of interest and geographical features. So, down through the years people have had these factors in mind, but the diversity has occurred year after year.

Let us not forget, as was pointed out a few minutes ago, that if redistribution takes place within the next 12 months, we will then be four years away from the census. If the election is deferred for another two years, we will be six years away from the census. The growth of the various urban and suburban populations will inflict upon certain areas the discrepancies that are apparent at the present moment. I hope to deal with that matter in a minute or two, if I have the chance.

Then, I hope that the commissioners will have in mind all the exceptions to representation by population which have been so numerous amongst our provinces. From 1914 to 1946, Ontario retained 82 seats although by 1933 she should have had only 78. This situation resulted from a special clause in the British North America Act which has since been repealed. In 1915 the senatorial floor was placed in the act which has given protection to the Atlantic provinces. When the province of Manitoba was formed a good many years ago, her population was too small to warrant even one member, but she was given four. That was in anticipation of an increase in population.

When British Columbia entered confederation her population would have entitled her to one member, and she was given six. In 1886, prior to the formation of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Northwest Territories were allotted four seats, although only two would have been justified on the basis of their population. In 1903 the territories were given ten members, although they were entitled to only six.

We are also familiar with the splitting of the Yukon and the Mackenzie into two seats, although their population factor would not warrant so high a representation. The commissioners should bear this in mind when they try to work out the application of representation by population. In fact, in the history of Canada we have never had it, and we are not

[Mr. Churchill.]

going to have it in the future. It is not going to be strictly applied because of the tremendous growth of urban centres presently taking place, and that is why we may be making a mistake in the legislation we are placing on the statute books.

This is a one-shot effort by the commissioners. We are not making provision for a review of the constituencies in two or three years time, yet all of us realize how quickly suburban developments can be put up in this country, and how quickly thousands of people will move into a certain area.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder would the hon. gentleman permit a question. On June 1 each year the dominion bureau of statistics publishes estimates of population. Does he think that a commission, in working out the tolerances, should take into account the growth that has taken place since 1961?

Mr. Churchill: I think that matter should be seriously considered by the committee, in view of the fact that the finding will be made four years after the last census; but that does not answer my other problem.

Mr. Pickersgill: I merely asked the question because that is what I thought the hon. gentleman was driving at, and I agree with it.

Mr. Churchill: It is one factor that should be taken into account because, even where I live in Ottawa, a suburban development started last fall. It is going up at a rapid pace and soon there will be several thousands of people living not very far from me, on what was vacant land just five months ago. The committee should examine the bill to see if some amendments could be made along that line. But that does not answer the problem that will arise prior to the next decennial census. Supposing there is an election—and don't get nervous—in 1965, and then another one before 1971; that means there will be two elections before the 1971 census, with perhaps another following two or three years later, with the result that we shall again be out of balance.

The only answer to that problem is perhaps what they have done in Great Britain. That is why I drew attention to the experience of Great Britain, when I was speaking the other night. I hope the commissioners will examine the activities of the British people in trying to solve this problem of redistribution. They coped with it in 1944 and they amended their act in 1947, with the express purpose of relaxing the rigid formula of a 25 per cent tolerance which they had written into it. They wiped that out, and they consolidated the act in 1949. They have passed two amending bills since that time, which have not seriously upset the main basis of their operation, and I