

*Electoral Boundaries*

of the Commission which will have to make up the new federal electoral boundaries for Quebec.

I will limit my remarks to five ridings situated in the heart of the Eastern Townships, I mean the ridings of Sherbrooke, Richmond, Shefford, Saint-Hyacinthe and Drummond. I know very well that it is very difficult to bring many changes to the boundaries of the other ridings of the Eastern Townships which are already limited by the American border, as in the case of the ridings of Missisquoi and Compton.

I know very well, Mr. Speaker, the geographic location of the five ridings as I mentioned as I know very well the impact of the variations in the electoral population of any of these ridings because, as a representative for one of these ridings, I have served in this majestic place many more years than any other of my colleagues who represent the four other ridings, and I mean my colleagues from Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin), from Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier), from Drummond (Mr. Pinard), and from Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner).

While studying very closely the population problem and while taking into account the geography of each of the ridings, I noticed first, M. Speaker, that the Richmond riding had 27,429 voters less on the 1974 voting lists than the Sherbrooke riding. Although these two ridings are close to each other, they are kind of competing with each other.

If I add the number of voters on the voting lists of Richmond in 1974 and on those of Sherbrooke the same year, I get the total of 104,581 voters and when I divide this figure by 2, I get a theoretical average of 52,290 electors by riding. This means 322 voters less in each riding and it also means that the average of 52,612 voters we get when we add the number of electors in each of the five ridings of the area is divided by five to get a theoretical average.

This means that, to get a better balance of the voting population in each of the five ridings and this is where the work of the Commission is very important, we should first study the possibilities which could allow us to get a better balance right from the start.

● (2340)

I refer to populations of voters in ridings next to mine, Richmond and Sherbrooke, the two ridings in the area which already had the greatest gap between them in 1974, before this tremendous difference in the number of electors, was maintained in 1976 in the new redistribution proposed by the commission.

According to the proposal before us, the riding of Sherbrooke would have a population of at least 84,595 electors, while Richmond riding would have 65,983, which would maintain a gap of more than 20,000 within two years or at the next federal general election, due to a possible greater increase in the urban riding of Sherbrooke in comparison with the slower growth of Richmond riding during the same period.

On the electoral lists of 1974 for the riding of Sherbrooke, 66,005 voters were registered.

There were 56,801 registered voters on the 1974 electoral lists for the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe, 51,856 for the riding of Shefford, 49,826 for the riding of Drummond, and 38,576

[Mr. Rondeau.]

for the riding of Richmond, for a total of 263,064 voters registered on the 1974 electoral lists for those five ridings, or an average of 52,612 voters by riding.

The riding of Sherbrooke had thus 13,383 more voters appearing on its 1974 electoral lists than the average for the ridings in the area. And the riding of Sherbrooke also had 27,429 more voters on its 1974 electoral lists than the riding of Richmond. While the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe had 4,189 more voters than the average for the four other ridings, it had nevertheless 9,199 fewer voters on its lists than the riding of Sherbrooke.

However, of the five constituencies mentioned, it seems that the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe is the one that would undergo under the proposal before us the most important geographical changes compared to 1974. For the proposal before us would remove from the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe the town of Marieville and amalgamate it with Chambly, while the towns of Saint-Hilaire and Otterburn Park as well as the parishes of Saint-Charles and Saint-Denis-sur-le-Richelieu, and the parishes of Saint-Bernard and Saint-Jude would become part of the new constituency of Verchères.

Since the commission seems to have to do a rather important shift in the population of the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe of 1974 to create the new constituency of Verchères, my proposal will take this fact into account and recommend that these changes benefit the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe in order to correct at the same time the excessively large difference in population between the constituencies of Sherbrooke and Richmond, as I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, and finally to strike a better balance between the five constituencies concerned, without for all that making too many changes in several constituencies.

Following the numerous changes proposed in the 1974 geographical map of the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe, I very humbly ask the members of the federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Quebec to kindly consider the following proposal: Drummond would not undergo any change as proposed by the commission and would have, according to the 1971 census, a population of 69,109.

Saint-Hyacinthe would remain as proposed by the commission, excluding however the population of Acton Vale, Saint-André-d'Acton and Sainte-Christine-de-Bagot; these localities would remain in Shefford as they have always been, which would give the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe, according to the 1971 census, a population of 68,932.

Richmond, such as proposed by the commission, would get the populations of Rock Forest and of Deauville who belonged to the riding of Sherbrooke in 1974 and are now on the present boundaries of the riding of Richmond. According to the 1971 census, this would amount to a population of 71,842 for the riding of Richmond. According to the suggestion of the commission, after the municipalities of Rock Forest and Deauville are transferred to Richmond, Sherbrooke would have a population of 84,595 according to the last census.

Shefford would remain as in 1974; according to the 1971 census, it had a population of 79,083. I would greatly appreciate that the municipality of Bromont which,