

Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Demers: A small Canada, like the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) said. It therefore seems completely illogical to me to form a new constituency by taking the southern part of Laval commonly called Laval-des-Rapides and a sector of Northern Montreal on the other side of the river. A large number of the problems faced by Laval because of its geographic position are, if not restricted to Laval, at least quite inherent to Laval. We have problems and, especially at this time, floods which are not a problem on the Montreal side, but many people in Laval have had to move because their basement is full of water.

Since Laval is also a developing city, we also have a lot of road construction. We have transportation problems since people will have to be transported from northern Montreal to Mirabel. They will pass through the whole of Laval. We also have residential and industrial development like nowhere else in Canada. Furthermore, Laval must build hospitals. So, because of its geography, the city of Laval has very special problems which are very different from those of surrounding areas.

There is also the type of population. The commission should have considered and examined the kind of population of Laval. Unlike the Montreal constituencies, we have still in Laval many farmers and vegetable gardeners, people who from one generation to the other farm the land and who, as you all know, have problems with which all hon. members from rural constituencies are familiar. And next to these farmers and gardeners, we have the city of Laval that most people know, a bedroom area from which most residents work in Montreal where the businesses and offices are. From this point of view also, because of this mixture of rural and urban dwellers, the problems of the city of Laval are certainly very different from those of Montreal.

However, census commissioners, as I mentioned before, have used an excessively rigid tool, that is the 1971 statistics, and did not consider the local population's expectations. There is also an extremely important factor in Laval. Laval lies north of Montreal and south of the new airport of Mirabel, so the entire metropolitan expansion occurs in Laval and the Duvernay and Laval ridings absorb an annual growth rate of 7,000 people.

In other words, on the basis of the statistics for 1971 they say, for instance, that the Duvernay riding has 93,000 inhabitants. However, a little arithmetic reveals that at the next election in 1978 in the Duvernay riding alone, there will be about 135,000 inhabitants. And, as we know, the national census is taken only every ten years and the next one will be in 1981. Then, we can assume that it will take about two years to study the new electoral boundaries. Then, the new redistribution will probably not take place before 1983. I think that in 1983 a part of Laval only, the Duvernay part, will have about 160,000 inhabitants and this is a very conservative figure.

So I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the Duvernay population should be represented as well as any other population in Canada and that these factors should have been considered in the new electoral boundaries. Laval should include three ridings all on the territory of the city of Laval.

And in the hope that the judges who worked on that redistribution will have the opportunity to carefully read

[Mr. La Salle.]

my arguments, I suggest to them to divide the Laval territory in three separate ridings.

Mr. Armand Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I know that our time is very limited in this debate. Therefore, I will simply put forward the arguments that justify, I suggest, some important changes in the findings of the commissioners' report on electoral boundary redistribution in Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, obviously I am not the only one who believes that the commissioners' report, as tabled in this House, is not in the best interests of the Quebec voters. As a matter of fact, no less than ten objections were filed in the House for the province of Quebec alone. That means that at least 100 members of Parliament thought this report had to be amended for one reason or another. Even members who represent other parts of the country have signed the objections filed for the province of Quebec. These members recognize that representations made by most Quebec members to have the commissioners amend their report after taking in consideration the arguments put forward in the House, are well founded.

I know that the commissioners' task is not an easy one and that it is difficult if not impossible to satisfy everybody at the same time. However, one must admit that when 100 members of parliament regardless of their party or province, rise to protest against the proposed electoral redistribution, it is an indication that something is wrong.

I do not intend, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the report as a whole concerning the province of Quebec. I know that other honourable members will address themselves to the regions they represent and that they will very ably make their points in favour of changes in the commissioners' report. I for one would like to deal in particular with the problems created by the commissioners' report as regard the Northwestern part of Quebec. I wish to congratulate the honourable member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) who made a very good case for Northwestern Quebec tonight.

• (2230)

As I said, I represent the northwest Quebec with my colleagues the hon. members for Abitibi and Témiscamingue (Messrs. Laprise and Caouette).

Mr. Speaker, my two colleagues were first elected to the House of Commons in 1962. They have seen the name and size of their respective ridings change once since 1968 when the redistribution added a new riding in northwest Quebec. All the people in that area were happy with the new division. At last, that large territory would be represented by a number of members more consistent with its huge size.

Mr. Speaker, the riding I now represent is one of the largest in the country. It extends on hundreds, if not thousands of miles and includes municipalities such as Cadillac and Chibougamau more than 400 miles apart. My colleague the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise) also represents the largest riding in the country. Its extends, so to speak, to the North Pole.

Both of us, and I am sure that I speak for him today, are proud to represent in the House of Commons people who put their confidence in us. We do our best to express their views in the House in all debates and we try to deal to