

### *Redistribution*

riding to represent and probably there is ambivalence of opinion as to whether the riding would be better off left as it is or changed. However, I think there is one matter which it is important to put on the record, that is, the view that there is a certain frivolity involved in the frequent changes to constituency boundaries.

The Rocky Mountain constituency, if it is to be changed next year, will have been in existence only six years. In that time people will have to come to terms with an entirely different concept of representation since they will be asked to make another radical change. It is important to make the point that there is widespread hope in that constituency that there will not be further changes that would add to the opinion that these things are being done frivolously.

I underline, of course, the comments made by my colleague, the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) about the difficulty of covering areas of great distance. I think it is important to recognize that when one represents a large rural constituency there is not only a problem of distance. A member of parliament for a constituency like Rocky Mountain must not only cope with extravagant distance but must also provide a wider range of services than a member representing a more compact urban area. In Rocky Mountain, for example, there is no industrial development office, there is no chamber of commerce with a staff, no architects, lawyers or other professionals, and no common media.

The member of parliament must in some measure fill that gap, and if he is conscientious he must also assume the more onerous responsibilities of resisting the insidious assaults of policy-makers, public and private, who have become bemused by population projections. I want to make the point about population projections particularly in relation to the Alberta map because clearly in this case there has been a reversal of the tolerance rule. Instead of exercising the tolerance rule in a way that would be of benefit to rural areas, it has been exercised by the commissioners in Alberta in a way that is harmful to rural areas. It assumes their decline. That is because of the unnecessary fealty to population projections. I think these projections have acquired everywhere something of the force of a proverb, which seriously limits analysis and obscures other evidence and options.

The danger inherent in projections is that once they become accepted, they also become self-fulfilling. For example, in Canada I believe the anticipation of rural decline has allowed the railroads to contrive line abandonments, it has allowed industry to ignore rural locations, and governments to establish metropolitan models in the future, all of which are sufficient to accomplish the anticipated decline. Yet there is no reason why modern industry must settle in cities and no inevitability about the concentration of Canadians in metropolitan areas. In fact, in my own constituency there is much contrary evidence, such as the establishment of modern industry like the Phillips Cable plant and the increasing removal of United States plants and head offices from uncomfortable metropolitan areas to smaller eastern U.S. cities and even towns.

In my own area, the exodus to communities like Pridis and Bragg Creek so as to avoid the pressure of the cities

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

indicates that people who are rich enough want to move. It indicates that they are not bound by these projections. So there is no reason why policymakers should be bound by these projections. I say that there has been in Alberta a reversal of the tolerance rule. That has had an unfortunate effect, not only upon the map with which we might be forced to live but also as a means of affirming this fealty to projections which, I think, is leading us toward a light that is much more concentrated, in an urban sense, than it need be.

The last matter that I want to raise at this stage is a very minor one, but it is important to my area because it concerns the adequacy of discussions and debate of the proposals of the commission in the province of Alberta by the people affected. It has to do with the opportunities for discussion and debate throughout the province. Certainly, while the letter of the law was adhered to in regard to new boundaries being communicated to residents of my constituency, the letter of the law is inadequate for many town councils and residents in the area who have a vital interest in it. They did not know, until they were informed by several members of parliament from Alberta, that the boundaries had been redrawn, that there was an opportunity for discussion; they did not know the location and the time of the discussions.

That sums up the basis of my concern about the map as it has been redrawn. I would like to repeat my fundamental concern, that there has been too much bemusement with population projections and, in Alberta at least, a complete reversal of the tolerance rule which was designed to recognize the problems of rural areas and which in Alberta has served only to accentuate those problems.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are now, for the fifth or sixth time debating the report of the commissioners on the redistribution of electoral ridings in several provinces indicates or should indicate to hon. members that some of us, as my colleague and friend the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) and some others, who have been through two redistributions under this law are satisfied that there are basic deficiencies in the law itself.

[*English*]

I want to point out here that the fact that we are here debating in this way and repeating the debates on redistribution that occurred some years ago indicates that there is a fundamental difficulty with the act as it now stands.

● (1720)

First of all, I would submit that the frustration of my colleagues who have spoken on this matter, their frustration at the performances throughout the hearings in the various provinces and at the reports that came out of the hearings can be traced to the fact that the commissioners need to give their reasons for making changes. No explanation is given. The whole burden lies upon the populace, upon the members and upon those organizations that are interested. They in turn must launch the attack. The commissioners never have to justify their decisions.

In the last debate the phrase, "gerrymandering by ignorance and competence" was used, and I am afraid it will be