

*Redistribution Commission*

hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador now has a constituency whose population is well over the 80,000 mark. In other words, it is above the norm, and yet he is saddled with this fantastic area. Not only that, it is an area that is separated by a considerable body of water, and while I will not say that the communications system in all this population scatter is primitive, it is certainly expensive, and many of these communities are so far apart that they have no community or affinity of interest.

I should like to suggest that right in the Canada Elections Act at the present time there is recognition of the special difficulties with ridings of this kind. That recognition is found in the fact that nomination day in these ridings is held at a different time than in the normal ridings in Canada. I should like to make a plea to the house that it consider some means of compensating and making adjustments with regard to area. I have gone into this matter very fully with the chief electoral officer, Mr. Castonguay, for whom I have a tremendous admiration. To my mind he is the most articulate civil servant I have ever encountered. I do not know whether he is in French, but certainly in English he is not only the most articulate but, with regard to the statutes and regulations that he administers, he is about the best informed man I have encountered in the federal civil service.

I have had difficulty in my discussions with Mr. Castonguay in getting him to express any interests in or enthusiasm for a recognition of the area problem. I think this is partly because he recognizes, almost in the way the Minister of Finance does with regard to taxation, that once you make any exceptions you open up all kinds of problems. But I think in this particular case some kind of exception should be considered. I know it may be unfair of me to interpret conversation with Mr. Castonguay, but I mean no unfairness and I think I am being accurate. Mr. Castonguay is willing to concede that it might be possible to make some adjustment in the formula that would make some compensation, but nevertheless he cannot quite see it.

Other people have suggested that one of the ways to do this is not to make any concession with regard to area but to give some extra consideration to members of parliament who represent such areas in terms of expense arrangements, travel arrangements or something like that. I would feel that would be the most invidious of all advantages that might be given. I think we are almost faced with the conundrum that confronts school teachers and boards of education. When you get into pay by merit you are into a morass and you need to set a standard. I do not think you can meet

the problem of a constituency of huge area by giving some kind of special financial or transport consideration to the member. I think that the consideration has to come about by making some exception in the arrangement of the population figure for such areas. In other words, any time you have or are likely to have a constituency of more than 50,000 square miles I suggest that there should be some arrangement in the instructions to the commissioners whereby they will do their best to see that the population figure is kept down when you have any area over 50,000 square miles.

I can perhaps explain this best in terms of the riding of Port Arthur which I represent. In the southwest corner you have over half the population within a few square miles in the city of Port Arthur. The riding slices up to the Manitoba boundary and actually it has several polls that lie well north of the constituency of Kenora-Rainy River. In the eastern part there are a number of polls with a considerable native population that are 350 to 400 miles from the main population centre and lie much closer to the sphere of influence of Cochrane or Algoma West or even Timiskaming and Timmins.

It seems to me that the special problem of the large riding is not one that is likely to be approached in any spirit of partisanship. From talking to members such as the hon. member for Churchill, the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador and the hon. member for Skeena I know that the difficulties we have in representing these huge areas with scattered population are worrisome to us in terms of the kind of job we can do. I have heard the hon. member for Yukon suggest in the house the great difficulties in looking after his huge riding, but his riding only has a population of a little over 12,000. Lord knows, it is bad enough when these 12,000 are scattered over 207,000 square miles and I agree that, comparatively speaking, there should be special consideration in creating a constituency there, despite all that area and the small population; but what about the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador whose riding has a population of over 80,000? In other words, his riding has a population roughly six times that of the riding of the hon. member for Yukon. His riding has over half the area of the Yukon and it has even more discontinuity in terms of transport arrangements.

I am not going to crystallize any suggestion I make into a definite proposal, but I should like to suggest to hon. members that when the bills are before us relating to this matter they be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to some adjustment to try to