

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Perhaps the minister might prepare himself to say something on this point in a general way. I appreciate that he certainly does not want to deal with what he thinks will be the result for every constituency in the country, but it is my impression that once the changes have been made at the 20 per cent level there may not be that much more difference. In other words, you are really only playing around with a few housing developments in the urban areas.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, I think we should examine with the greatest of care the bill now before us. I appreciate the desire of the Minister of Transport to get this thing pushed ahead. That is the general idea when you are on the government side. My experience in the House of Commons has been that legislation does not normally detain the house unless it is highly controversial. On the other hand, legislation that is put through the House of Commons sometimes contains errors. Our job as legislators is to examine legislation with the greatest care when it comes before us. If there is any wasted time in the house, it is wasted on other aspects of our life here. I feel therefore it is important for us, when we are dealing with something which is going on the statute books, to make sure it is correct.

We have had plenty of experience with having to alter bills which have been brought before us. We have accepted in principle the bill to set up a brand new system to deal with redistribution. The principle which has met with general acceptance here has been to remove from the field of political controversy one of the most highly controversial subjects that affects politicians. Having done that, we are not content with making this major change, the first one in a hundred years, but some people want to go further and place certain restrictions within the bill. The advocates of strict representation by population have been heard. I am suggesting that we move slowly on some of these matters and that we examine the situation which has existed in the past in Canada.

The other night when I was restricted as to time and was speaking on the second reading of the bill, I indicated I had some concern with regard to what might be in the minds of the commissioners. The mere fact you select a man as a commissioner does not endow him with any special intellectual capacity to judge an issue. The persons who are going to be selected as commissioners are not likely to be persons who have had practical experience in politics. They may be men of very sound judgment, and I hope they are. Nevertheless, there has to be a

background of experience for persons who are going to decide a question as important as this particular one.

I am not at all sure that the commissioners who will be working on this job will have the necessary background. I expressed some concern the other night that they might ignore the opinions expressed in the House of Commons. I hope they do not. I expressed concern that they might be swayed by opinions, one way or the other, expressed in this house, and they might not get the consensus of the House of Commons with regard to this particular matter. I suggested that if the commissioners had, over the years, given any serious consideration to the matter, they might have been imbued with the theory of "rep by pop" and might be swayed that way unduly. I did suggest, too, that I was converted from the "rep by pop" attitude a number of years ago. I went into that subject very fully at one time, and I certainly changed my mind when I came to study the Canadian scene and the redistributions that have occurred in Canada.

I want the commissioners to have in their minds the fact that in this country we never have had strict representation by population, attractive as that idea is. In fact, we have varied from it in every redistribution. We are living at the moment under the redistribution that took place about ten years ago, the ninth redistribution. There were eight former redistributions, starting from confederation. The quota per member rose from 18,000 to 54,000 when we reached the ninth redistribution, and the number of members has increased from 200 to 262. The difference in population by constituencies has varied all the way from a low of 10,000 to a high of 40,000 in the first two redistributions and from 10,000 to 80,000 or more in the six later redistributions. Prior to the ninth redistribution made about ten years ago, there was a constituency in Canada with a population of 10,000; one with 17,000; one with 18,000; and at the top of the scale there was one with 159,000; another with 115,000 and another 101,000. In all of the eight redistributions prior to the one of 1952, only one tenth of the constituencies were within the allotted quota of population, which gives hon. members an idea of the great discrepancies that have persisted.

Hon. members have pointed out the great discrepancies that persist at the present time. These are most noticeable within the large cities. These figures have been put on the record, so I will not repeat them. I am interested in attempting to use this medium to instruct the commissioners with regard to the history of redistribution in our country.